Children of Canada, Children of the World

Canada

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Errata

p. 38 **% should not appear after figures in bar graph.**

p. 80 ***Child Health***, **line 17 should read "Nearly 15 million children die every *year* . . . ."**

Children of Canada, Children of the World

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for the
World Summit for Children

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A Message from the Prime Minister of Canada

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I am pleased to contribute this national paper on the occasion of the World Summit for Children.

This Summit is a unique opportunity to focus on the issues and conditions that affect the welfare of all children of the world. For this reason, Canada has joined with Egypt, Mali, Mexico, Pakistan and Sweden as one of the initiating countries calling for this unprecedented meeting of Heads of State and Government from around the world.

Children of Canada, Children of the World is an attempt to portray a fair and balanced assessment of the state of Canada's children, noting both our major accomplishments and those challenges still to be met. Canada's international efforts on behalf of the world's children are also summarized.

Canada views the improvement of children's lives as an individual and collective responsibility. It is incumbent on the governments of the world to join forces with parents, communities and organizations to secure a dignified future for all children. The World Summit for Children is a significant step towards this noble goal.

Introduction

As part of the preparations for the World Summit for Children, each participating country has been asked to prepare a national paper which assesses the state of its children and describes, in general terms, its programs and policies for children.

In response to this request, the Government of Canada has prepared *Children of Canada, Children of the World*. This report gives the federal government's perspective on the state of Canadian children.

In reading the report, it is important to keep in mind that, while the Government of Canada has a major role to play in ensuring the well-being of children, it cannot carry out this mission alone. Many areas of public policy and services affecting children are the responsibility of the governments of the provinces and territories which make up Canada, while others are shared by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. In addition, there are hundreds of municipal and town councils, school boards, other public agencies and non-governmental organizations. All play critical roles in ensuring the well-being of Canada's children.

There is much more that can be said about the state of Canada's children than space has permitted for inclusion in this report. In the days and months following the World Summit for Children, Canada hopes that there will be a continuing discussion on the state of children and what can be done to improve their well-being. This report, then, is part of the Government of Canada's contribution to that on-going dialogue.

Improving the Lives of Children in Canada

Canada has strived to achieve a high standard of physical and emotional well-being and economic security for its children. Federal, provincial, territorial and municipal governments invest substantial resources in promoting the health, safety and welfare of children.

Canada has a publicly funded, universal system of health insurance. There is good quality prenatal and perinatal care. Vaccine-preventable infectious diseases have been reduced through public immunization programs. Legislation has established standards for food and there are guidelines for drinking water.

Governments in Canada promote healthy lifestyles by encouraging regular fitness activities, healthy eating habits and the reduction in the levels of smoking and drug and alcohol abuse. Canada has set safety standards for construction, clothing, toys and playground equipment.

Governments finance education, which is compulsory for all children. There are opportunities for lifelong learning, and libraries are publicly supported. Governments in Canada have regulatory measures in place to ensure that the broadcasting and communications industries take the best interests of children into account.

A range of child care services that assist working parents are also funded by governments in Canada. Other services support families in times of crisis, and a system of provincial and territorial child welfare agencies has been established to protect children in the event of family disruptions.

A program of family allowances provides cash benefits to all families with children. Additional financial assistance to families is available through the tax system. All provinces and territories have social assistance programs that aid families whose financial resources are inadequate to meet their needs. In addition, governments in Canada have developed social housing for low-income families with children.

Canada has an abundance of parks and playgrounds with areas for safe play and physical activity for children. Vast amounts of green space are protected to ensure that children and future generations will enjoy a country rich in wildlife and natural resources.

Although Canada has accomplished a great deal for its children, many challenges remain. Despite Canada's wealth, there are still too many children growing up in families with inadequate incomes. Those children are at greater risk of poor health, often do poorly at school and have fewer opportunities for social and cultural development.

Children from aboriginal families are particularly disadvantaged. The incidence of poor health and the rates of low income and of suicide are far higher for aboriginal children than for other Canadian children.

Immigrant and refugee children have special needs. Some must learn a new language and adapt to a new culture while maintaining their own customs and traditions. These children must also adjust to school and establish supportive relationships within their peer groups.

Children with disabilities – especially children with multiple disabilities – face particular challenges. A variety of programs have been established that support them in their daily lives, but not all their needs have been fully addressed.

Although Canada supports a range of child care services, there are families whose child care needs are not yet adequately met. The need for a variety of child care services continues to grow as the composition of Canadian families changes and more women join the paid labour force.

Physical, sexual and emotional abuse and neglect of children must not be allowed to continue. A network of child welfare services is in place to protect children who have been abused, but prevention must be emphasized to ensure that all children live free from abuse.

There is legislation and a network of services that ensure that children are not deserted or abandoned on the street. Nevertheless, as some children approach adolescence, they leave abusive situations at home, run away from the supervision of child welfare services, or leave home in search of independence. Appropriate ways to respond to their needs must be found.

The potential for abuse of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs after childhood is serious cause for concern. It is hoped that the use of those substances is gradually being reduced through awareness programs and improved legislation.

Canada needs to find better ways to reduce the incidence of injuries among children. As well, the problem of infants born with AIDS requires attention.

Finally, Canada is equally susceptible to the environmental problems that face the entire international community. Alone, and in co-operation with other nations, Canada must take steps to protect the environment so as to ensure that all children inherit a cleaner world.

Children's Care and Development: A Shared Responsibility

Parents have the primary responsibility for the care and development of their children. However, all sectors of Canadian society – governments, employers, organized labour, and voluntary and religious organizations – share the responsibility for children by supporting parents as they raise their children.

Canada is a federal state consisting of a national, ten provincial and two territorial governments. The Constitution designates the areas of jurisdiction that are the exclusive purview of the federal or provincial/territorial governments and those that are shared by both.

The federal government supports families with children in many ways. Prominent among these are:

- cash payments on behalf of children;
- indirect financial support through the reduction of taxes;
- benefits for working parents of newborn and adopted children;
- transfer payments or cost-shared programs to assist provinces and territories in the financing of health care, post-secondary education, social assistance, social services, and social housing; and
- financial support to voluntary organizations.

The provincial and territorial governments legislate, administer and finance programs in the areas of public education, health care, social assistance, social services, and housing for low-income families with children. Provincial and territorial governments also support recreational and cultural programs and assume major responsibility for the public health standards in their respective jurisdictions.

The federal government and several provinces have multicultural programs which provide support to institutions and community organizations that encourage understanding and respect for children from diverse ethnic backgrounds.

Local governments also share in the responsibility for children. They build and maintain the parks, playgrounds, sports arenas and swimming pools where children play. They build libraries and support cultural activities such as children's theatre, music and dance. Provinces and territories share in the costs of some of these activities. Some local governments also help finance and deliver social assistance and child care services.

> . . . the child, for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.
>
> *Convention on the Rights of the Child, Preamble*

The voluntary sector plays an important role in children's care and development. Formal organizations in the voluntary sector provide services and advocate on behalf of children. Informal organizations such as neighbourhood associations organize community events, and parent-teacher associations raise money for special equipment. Ethnocultural organizations ensure that many heritage languages and traditions are passed on to the next generation. Voluntary organizations are supported by the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who provide their dollars and their time to these efforts.

The voluntary sector also gathers and provides information about child health. It promotes high-quality services for families and for the protection of children. The voluntary sector has actively articulated the need for the various child care arrangements required in Canada. It promotes safety by advocating standards for clothing, toys and equipment. Volunteers educate children about accident prevention, safety in sports and first aid; they teach children about abuse and where to seek help if they need protection.

Religious organizations sponsor educational, recreational and social programs for children. Many run child care centres and summer camps.

Employers also share indirectly in the responsibility for Canada's children. Some personnel policies allow flexible work schedules to help parents accommodate their child care needs and provide for the care of sick children. Some employers grant personal leave so parents can participate in children's school activities or meet with teachers. Still other employers sponsor day care services in the workplace and the community.

Unions have implemented policies that address the child care needs of workers. Through collective bargaining, some have achieved a variety of child care supports, including funding for child care services in the workplace and community.

Children's Rights

Canada attaches great importance to the protection of human rights. The rights of all Canadians, including children, are guaranteed by the *Canadian Bill of Rights* and by the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, which forms part of the Constitution.

Under the Charter, all persons in Canada have the right to life, liberty and security. The fundamental freedoms of religion, expression, peaceful assembly and association are also protected. The Charter guarantees the right to equality under the law and prohibits discrimination on many grounds, including age and gender. There are also rights relating to the use of English and French, the two official languages of Canada, and to minority language education.

In addition, Canada's juvenile justice legislation, *The Young Offenders Act*, which applies to young people between the ages of twelve and 18, also emphasizes the importance of the rights of young people in conflict with the law, including all the rights stated in the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, as well as special protections in light of their dependence and varying levels of development and maturity.

As well, Canada has made commitments internationally to the protection of human rights. Canada is a party to the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, which includes rights to health, an adequate standard of living and social security. Canada is also party to the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* and the associated *Optional Protocol*. That Covenant provides protection similar to the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*, while the Protocol establishes an individual complaint process to the United Nations Human Rights Committee. Canada has also ratified the *Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women*. Its provisions ensure that girls and young women are afforded equal opportunities in education, vocational training and sport.

Children's rights in particular were formally recognized at the international level with the adoption of the United Nations *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* in 1959. During the International Year of the Child in 1979, many nations advocated a firmer commitment to children's rights. Over the past ten years, Canada has been actively involved in helping to draft and promote the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child*. States that ratify the Convention are bound by its principles and obligations.

States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 2(1)

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child* was adopted by consensus in the United Nations General Assembly on November 20, 1989. Canada signed the Convention on May 28, 1990. Before Canada can ratify the Convention, the federal, provincial and territorial governments must review their respective laws and policies to ensure that they are consistent with the obligations set out in the Convention.

In general, the Convention deals with the full spectrum of children's social, economic, cultural, civil and political rights. More specifically, the rights protected by the Convention fall into three areas:

- those that relate primarily to the **physical and material well-being of children**, such as those to life, health care, social security and an adequate standard of living;
- those designed to **protect children** from various forms of abuse, neglect and exploitation; and
- those that seek to contribute to the **full development of children**, by means of education, play and leisure activities, cultural and linguistic rights and the right of children to express their views and participate in decisions which affect them.

Canada's signing of the Convention indicates a firm intention to ratify it and comply with its principles. The Convention embraces a set of ideals that will inspire and further shape our laws, policies and programs. The principles articulated in the Convention will also provide a benchmark by which progress in safeguarding the dignity and worth of children can be measured.

Canada's Children: Some Basic Facts

Understanding Canada's children requires some basic demographic information: How many children are there in Canada? Where do they live? In what types of families are children found? One question is even more basic: How are children defined?

There is no universal definition of children in Canada or elsewhere. Although most would agree that pre-teenagers are children, there is far less agreement about those in their teen-age years. For the purposes of this report, children are defined as persons under age 15.

This definition is consistent with the United Nations definition of youth as those between the ages of 15 and 24 developed for the International Youth Year (IYY) in 1985. Following the IYY, Canada's Minister of State for Youth was mandated to focus on employment and training issues for youth, generally aged 15 to 24, and to work closely with other federal departments and agencies involved in broader social issues affecting youth training and development such as education, environment, literacy, urban crime, and drug and alcohol abuse.

Wherever possible, data in this report apply to children under age 15. In some instances, the available data required the inclusion of people aged 15 or older. To avoid confusion, this is clearly indicated in the text. Data come from various Statistics Canada surveys and censuses. Most surveys exclude children living in Yukon and the Northwest Territories, on Indian reserves and in institutions. Census data generally include these children, with the exception of incompletely enumerated Indian reserves.

Since the early 1970s, Canada has experienced significant social changes which have affected children. Children now live in a society that is very different from years past. Today, children are fewer in number, ethnically diverse, live mainly in urban areas and increasingly in lone-parent families.

Canada's "baby boom" years (the late 1940s to the early 1960s) saw a large increase in the number of children, but that number has declined in recent decades. Fewer children and an increase in life expectancy in Canada have resulted in an aging population.

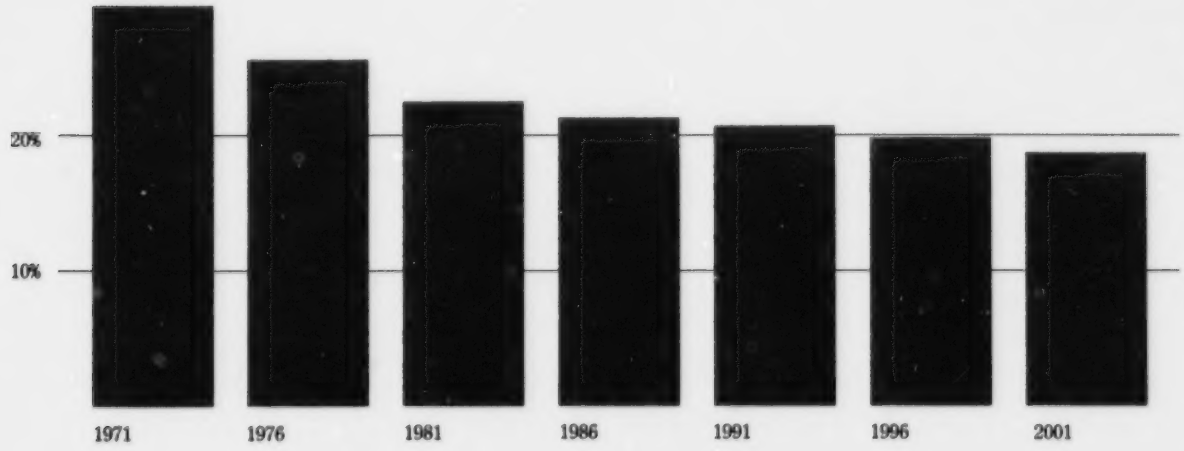
In 1971, children comprised 29.6% of the Canadian population. In 1986, they represented 21.3% of the total population and are projected to make up 18.7% of the population by the year 2001.

As of June 1, 1989, Canada's population totalled an estimated 26.2 million persons, of whom 21% were children under age 15. Of those 5.5 million children, 33.6% were age zero to four, 33.5% were between five and nine, and 33% were between ten and fourteen. There were an estimated 2.8 million boys (51.2% of the total) and 2.7 million girls (48.8% of the total).

According to the 1986 census, there were 260,000 aboriginal children under age 15 in Canada in that year.

The decline in the child population results from a decreasing fertility rate. Couples are having fewer children and having them later in life. The fertility rate averaged 1.7 births per woman in the 1980s compared to almost four births per woman during the height of the baby boom.

Children under 15 as a percentage of total population, Canada, 1971–2001*



* Projections begin in 1991.

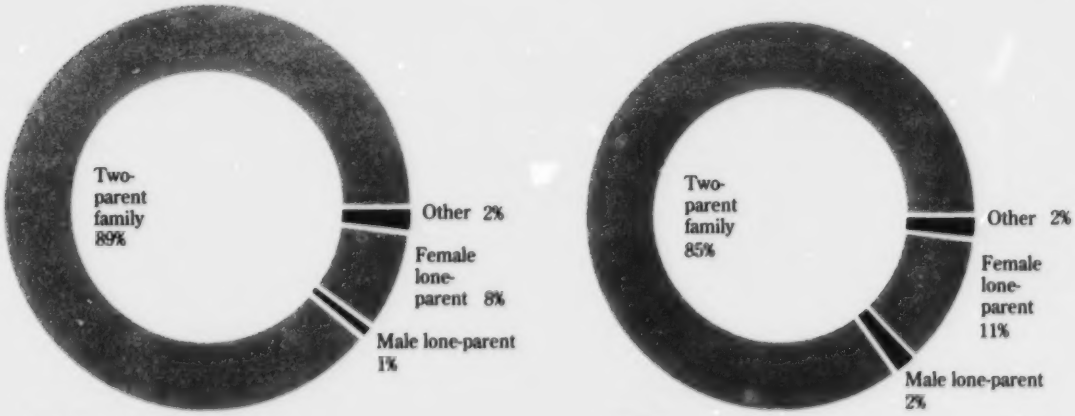
Sources: 1971, 1976, 1981 and 1986 Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada, and Population Projections for Canada, Provinces and Territories, 1989–2011, Statistics Canada, Catalogue 91-520.

The composition of families has also changed over time. Statistically, the average family size was 3.5 persons in 1976 and 3.1 in 1986, with the average number of children declining from 1.6 to 1.3 during the same period.

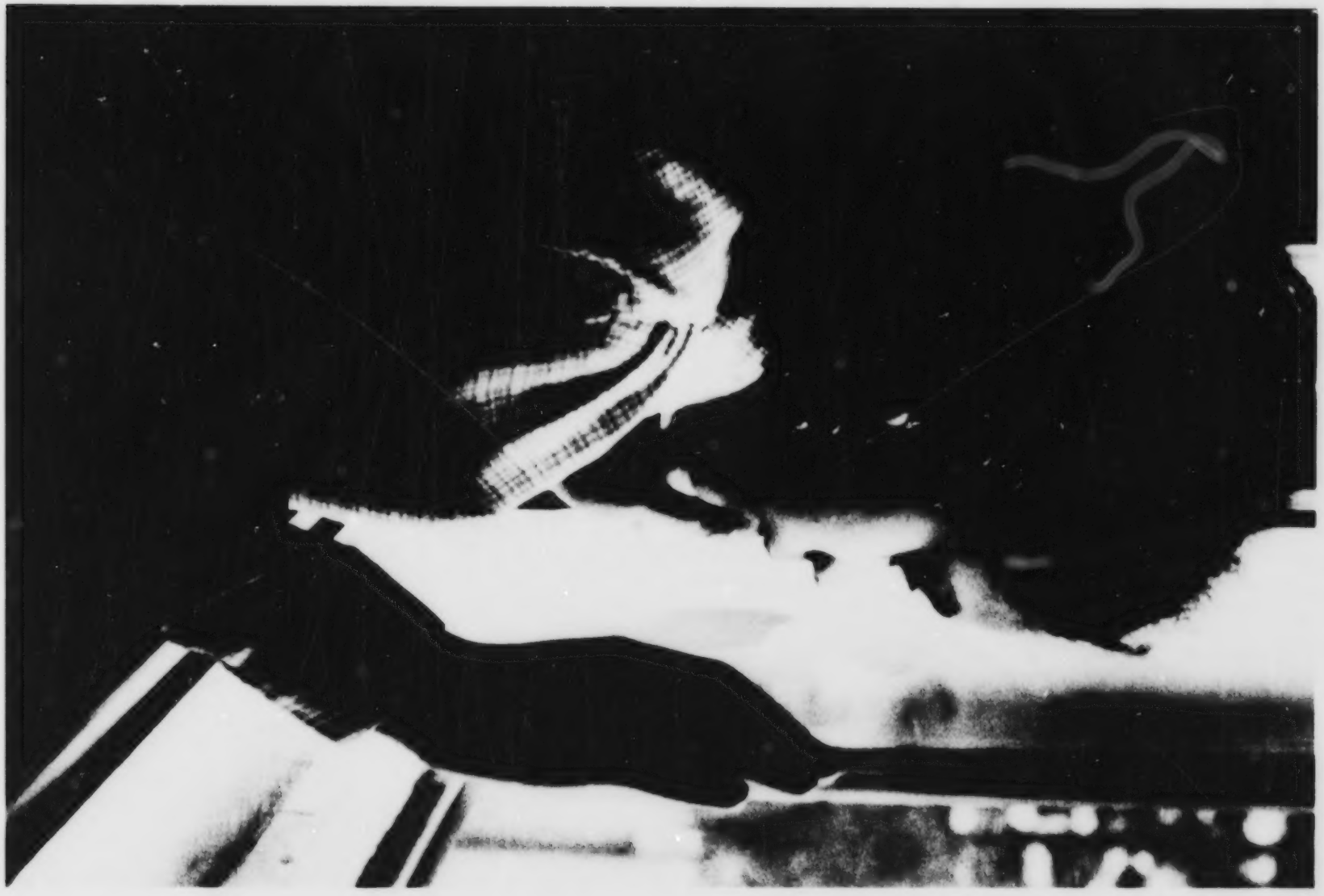
The majority of children live with parents (98% in 1986), most in two-parent families. However, there has been a significant increase in lone-parent families. The proportion of children living in two-parent families declined from 89% in 1976 to 85% in 1986 while the proportion of children in lone-parent families increased from 9% to 13% during the same period. In 1986, more children lived with female (11%) than with male lone-parents (2%).

The rise in lone-parent families is due largely to a higher divorce rate. In 1971, one in five marriages ended in divorce compared to one in three in 1986. Almost half of all divorces in 1986 involved at least one dependent child.

Percentage distribution of children under 15 in private households, by family type, 1976 and 1986



Sources: 1976 and 1986 Censuses of Canada, Statistics Canada, unpublished data.



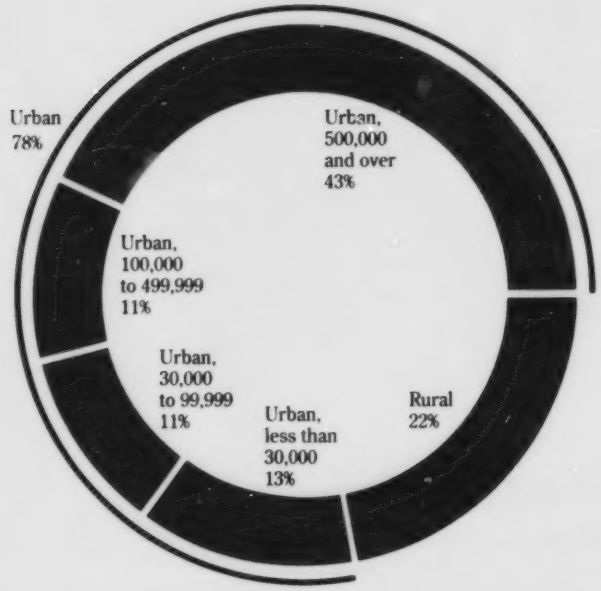
Canada's children are ethnically diverse and live within a broad cultural mosaic. In 1986, 43% of children had origins other than British or French. Children in Canada come from all over the world. Between January 1980 and December 1989, 259,303 children under age 15 were granted landed immigrant status in Canada; of these the largest numbers were from the following ten countries:

Country of last permanent residence	*Total number of landed immigrant children*
Vietnam	22,537
United Kingdom	22,020
Hong Kong	19,139
Poland	14,714
United States	14,538
Philippines	10,364
Jamaica	8,190
India	7,288
El Salvador	6,975
Kampuchea	6,140

Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, Immigration Statistics Division, Landed Immigrant Data System, 1990.

Canada's gradual transformation from a largely rural to an urbanized society means that three out of four children now live in urban areas. In 1989, 78% of children under age 16 lived in urban centres and 22% resided in rural areas. The majority of aboriginal children live in rural and isolated areas.

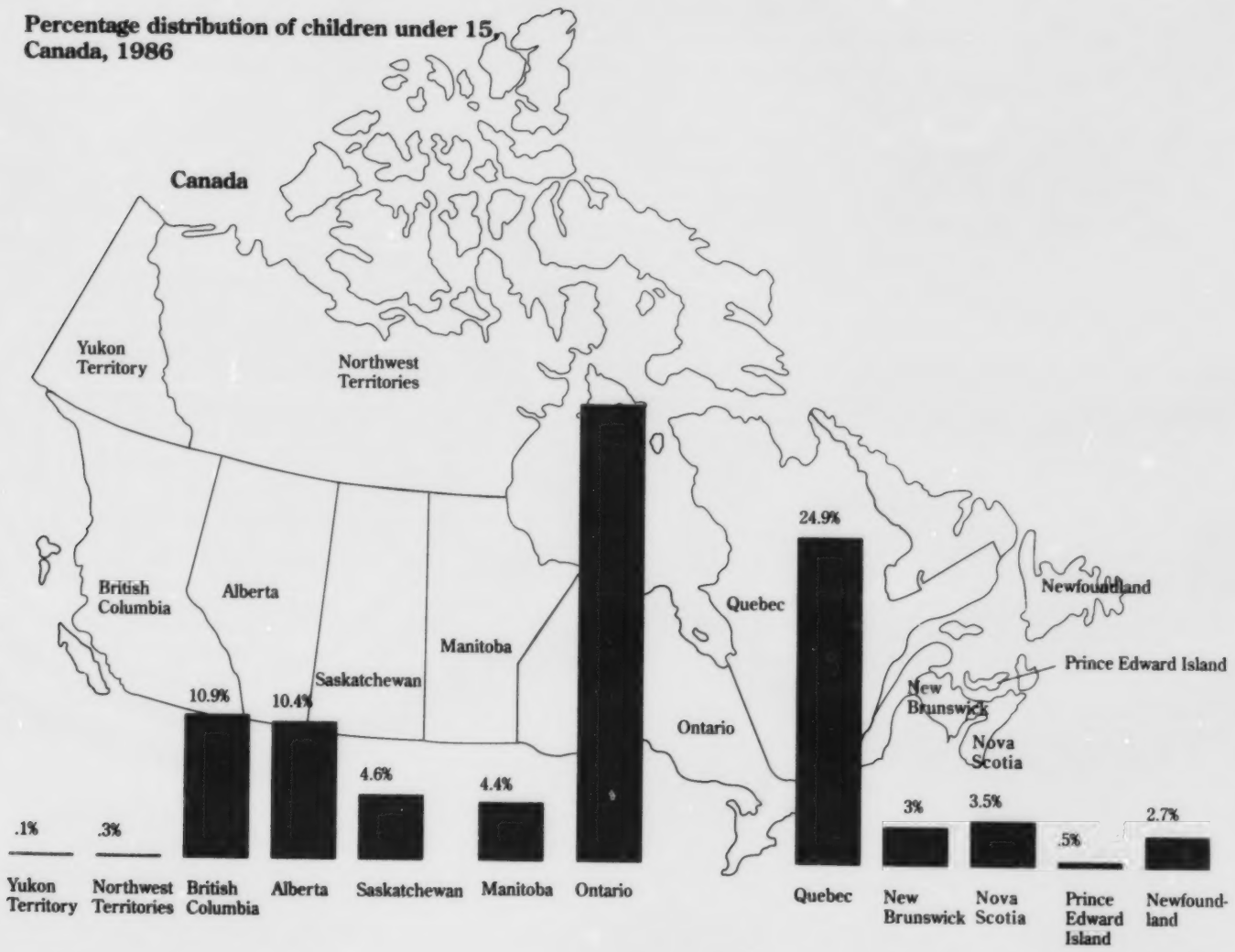
Percentage distribution of children under 16 living in urban and rural areas, showing urban population size groups, 1989



Source: Household Income, Facilities and Equipment Microdata Files, Household Surveys Division, Statistics Canada, unpublished data.

Most children live in Canada's central and western regions. In 1986, 34.7% of children under age 15 lived in Ontario, 24.9% in Quebec, 30.7% in the Western provinces and the territories, and 9.7% in the Atlantic provinces. This distribution parallels that of the total population in Canada.

Percentage distribution of children under 15, Canada, 1986



Source: 1986 Census of Canada, Statistics Canada, Catalogue 93-101.

In 1985, the largest number of aboriginal children under age 18 lived in Ontario (24.2% of the 297,415 total), but more than half (54%) were in the Western provinces: 16.3% lived in British Columbia, 15.2% in Alberta, 10.9% in Saskatchewan and 11.6% in Manitoba.

In 1989, the majority of children (70.8%) under 16 lived in single detached dwellings (which also housed 86% of all children living in owned dwellings). Canadian housing is generally of high quality. In 1989, 71.5% of children under 16 lived in housing considered to be in a good state of repair. Virtually all houses have indoor plumbing, clean water and adequate heat, light and ventilation.

The social and demographic trends affecting children have implications for the ways in which Canada responds to their needs. As society changes, so must its institutions, laws, programs and services in order to ensure the well-being of all children in Canada.

Health

The concept of children's health encompasses all aspects of their physical, mental and social well-being. The major improvements in the health status of Canadian children can be directly attributed to advances in the field of public health, particularly in areas such as provision of safe water, treatment of sewage and adequate housing, and a general increase in Canada's standard of living. Efforts have also focused on the prevention of disease and on encouraging healthy choices through public awareness and promotional programs delivered, individually or co-operatively, by health professionals, schools, government agencies and a variety of community organizations.

In assessing the well-being of Canadian children, however, it is generally the state of their physical health – the absence of disease or injury – which provides the most reliable and quantifiable indicators.

In Canada, one of the factors that has influenced the availability and accessibility of health care services for children has been the establishment of provincial and territorial health insurance programs. Although there is no single national health insurance system – the delivery of health services being a provincial responsibility under the Constitution – the federal *Canada Health Act* sets out certain program conditions which the provincial and territorial plans must satisfy in order to qualify for federal funding. These universal plans ensure that all Canadians, including children, have access to hospital and medical services regardless of gender, age, race or, most importantly, ability to pay.

In 1990, Canada will spend more than $52 billion on health care, an average of $2,000 for every man, woman and child in the country. How are these costs supported? Approximately three-quarters of the total amount spent on health services is financed through federal and provincial/territorial taxation. Municipal governments and charitable organizations are also active in the financing of health programs and facilities. Certain costs, such as non-prescription drugs, are paid in whole or in part by the individual.

States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 24(1)

The appreciation of the specialized needs of children has led to the construction of facilities specifically focused on their medical and health priorities. To date, ten children's hospitals dedicated to the care and treatment of children and the support of their parents and families have been established throughout Canada.

Early Health

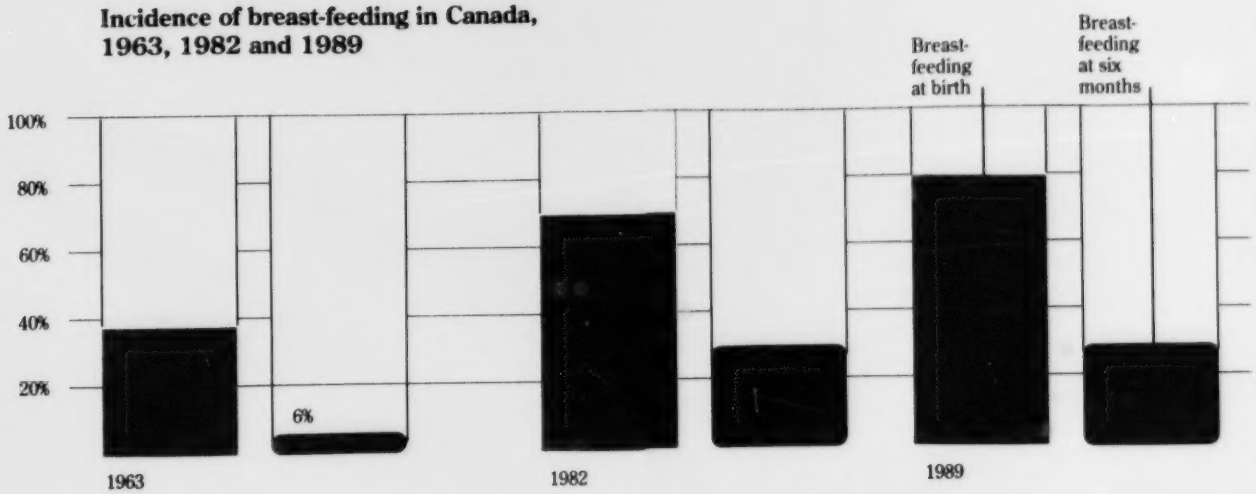
The majority of Canada's children are born healthy. Their parents are assisted from the earliest stages of pregnancy by a network of health, educational and support services offered through the medical professional community, health associations and government agencies. All medical services required by the mother and the newborn are covered by provincial and territorial health insurance programs. Thus, cost is not a factor in determining the quality or quantity of care that is available to the expectant parents or infant.

Improved standards of prenatal and postnatal health care in Canada have also had a significant impact on the welfare of Canadian mothers and children. National guidelines promoting healthy nutrition during the prenatal period, in infancy and for pre-schoolers have been developed and implemented by government and non-government agencies. These have been highlighted recently in two reports from Health and Welfare Canada entitled "Nutrition Recommendations" and "Action Towards Healthy Eating".

Canada has been active in recent years in the promotion of breast-feeding. Eighty percent of mothers breast-fed their newborns in 1989, compared to only 38% in 1963.

Although the Government of Canada promotes the ideal of breast-feeding as the preferred method of infant nutrition, it also recognizes the need to provide safe, nutritious alternatives to ensure the healthy development of all babies. The composition standards and the labelling of breast-milk substitutes are, therefore, regulated through federal legislation.

Incidence of breast-feeding in Canada, 1963, 1982 and 1989

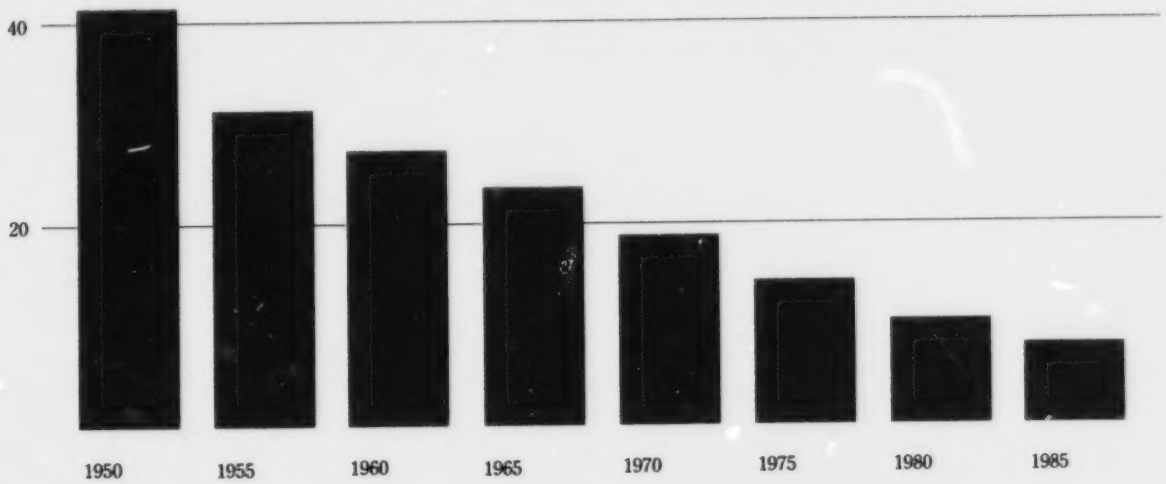


Source: "Present Patterns and Trends in Infant Feeding in Canada", Health and Welfare Canada, 1990, p.1.

One of the most reliable indicators of the improvement in the health of Canadian children remains the decrease in the incidence of infant mortality, defined as the number of deaths during the first year of life. Caution must be exercised when comparing Canadian statistics to those of other nations, however, because of differences in the definitions of life at birth, live birth and stillbirth.

During the 35-year period from 1950 to 1985, infant mortality dropped by more than 80% in Canada, from 41.5 to eight per 1,000 live births. Among aboriginal children, whose infant mortality rate historically has been above that of the general population, the rate has been decreasing even more rapidly than the general trend, an indication that the disparity can be eliminated.

Infant mortality rates, Canada, 1950–1985 (Rate per 1,000 live births)



Source: Statistics Canada, Vital Statistics, Birth and Death, Catalogue 84-204, various years.

Why do even a small percentage of Canadian children still not survive those critical first months? Low birth weight remains the main risk factor associated with infant death. The World Health Organization has defined low birth weight as less than 2,500 grams. Measured against this standard, a constant average of 6% of Canadian infants over the past ten years have been born at or below this minimum level. Low-weight infants who survive birth must still overcome increased risks of neuro-developmental disabilities and chronic health problems relative to other infants, often continuing in childhood.

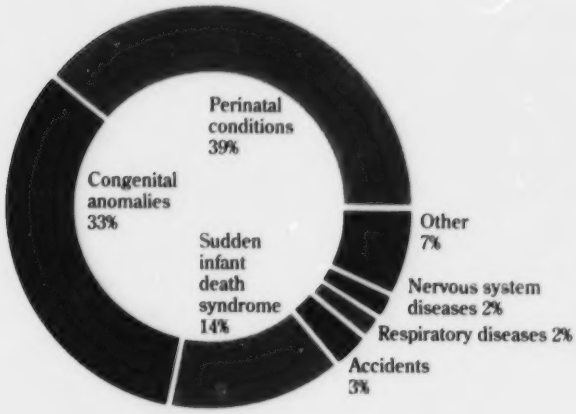
Principal factors associated with low birth weight

- Poor nutrition before and during pregnancy
- Multiple births
- Use of tobacco, alcohol, drugs
- Low socio-economic status

Babies born to adolescent mothers have a 35% greater chance of low birth weight than those born to older mothers.

The rate of pregnancy in adolescents varies, but has stabilized at 38 per 1,000 young women aged 15 to 19.

Leading causes of death, Canada 1988



Children under 1 year

Source: Health Status Section, Canadian Centre for Health Information, Statistics Canada, unpublished data.

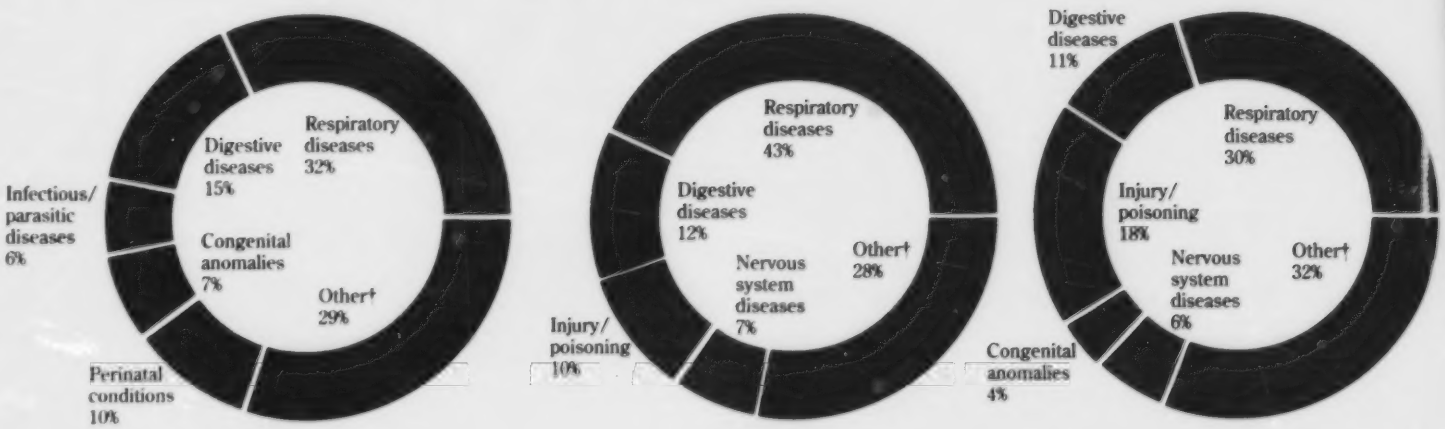
Illness patterns in Canadian children have changed over the last 50 years. Although infection is still a leading cause of illness in our children, they are less likely to die from these infectious diseases than before.

Immunization against:
Diphtheria
Pertussis
Tetanus
Polio
Measles
Mumps
Rubella

The improvement in the control of communicable disease among children can be attributed in large part to the expansive immunization programs that have been established throughout Canada. Ninety-five to 99% of children have been vaccinated by the time they begin school at about age five. That initial level of immunization is then monitored and supplemented free of charge through in-school clinics or by family physicians throughout the school years.

Although the success of Canadian immunization programs has a significant impact on the health of children, continued vigilance is required to ensure that both levels and standards are maintained. Recent outbreaks of two communicable diseases, whooping cough and measles, in localized pockets of the country serve as sharp reminders of the continuing need to educate parents and communities about the importance of maintaining immunization levels.

Leading causes of hospitalization*, Canada 1985–86



Children under 1 year | **Children aged 1 to 4 years** | **Children aged 5 to 14 years**

* Based on number of discharges.
† Including ill-defined conditions.

Source: Health Status Section, Canadian Centre for Health Information, Statistics Canada, unpublished data.

There are, however, new or persistent threats to the health of children against which no vaccine has yet been developed and which continue to exact a toll. Diseases of the respiratory system, including asthma and upper respiratory infections, are now the leading causes of hospitalization in children, while infectious illnesses in general – colds, influenza and viruses – are responsible for the majority of visits to doctors' offices. For many of these, there is no effective prevention and only symptomatic therapy. Increasingly, environmental, social and economic factors are thought to influence these conditions.

Among the newest challenges in the pediatric field, as well as to society at large, is the emergence of the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and AIDS. Although only 54 children under age 15 in Canada have been reported as having AIDS as of July 1990, Canada has joined the international community in recognizing AIDS as an increasing health risk affecting children and youth.

In 80% of the cases involving children with AIDS, the virus was transmitted prenatally or during the birthing process. Since the risk of transmission of HIV to children through blood transfusions has been virtually eliminated due to donor screening and blood testing procedures, it is the behaviour of parents in the social transmission of this disease that must be modified if the next generation is not to be more seriously affected.

Fortunately, children in Canada are currently at very low risk from AIDS. Prevention, however, is essential. To that end, the Government of Canada has established the National Strategy on AIDS. Among the Strategy's initiatives is a survey to determine how many child-bearing women are infected with HIV and the funding of projects to prevent infection in women. Prevention programs also target children, promoting informed, responsible choices and safe-sex practices in future years.

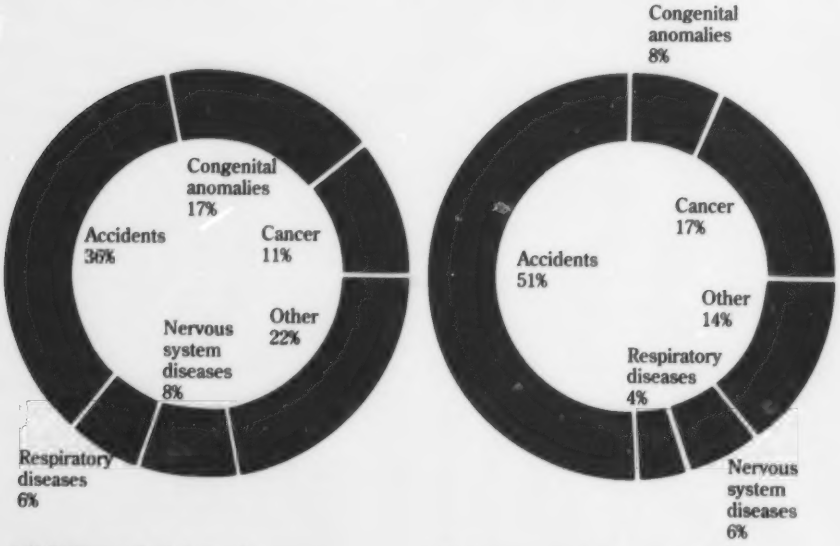
Not all illnesses or diseases in Canadian children are life-threatening. Many that are preventable and whose control contributes significantly to the well-being of our children remain on the national health agenda. Among these is the prevention of dental disease. Canada has made substantial progress in reducing tooth decay among children through fluoridation of community drinking water, increasing dental care and oral hygiene education. Oral health services now account for more than 5.8% of total medical expenditures in Canada and, although statistics are scarce, there is evidence of a significant improvement in the control of tooth decay among Canadian children.

The main exception to this is found among aboriginal children, where the incidence of cavities remains disproportionately high. Likewise, dental decay rates for some children of low-income and immigrant families remain above the norm, although there has been improvement.

The rate of childhood injuries due to accidents remains a major cause for concern. Unfortunately, many accidents involving children result in serious injury. In Canada, injuries cause more than half of all deaths among children aged five to fourteen.

The causes of these injuries tend to vary with the age of the child. In younger school-age children, traffic accidents where the victims are pedestrians cause the highest number of injuries and deaths, while traffic accidents involving children on bicycles result in the greatest number of fatalities in children between ten and 14 years of age. For every school-age child killed in a traffic accident, 90 are injured. In 1987, this represented a total of 20,000 injuries to Canadian children.

Leading causes of death, Canada 1988



Children aged 1 to 4 years **Children aged 5 to 14 years**

Source: Health Status Section, Canadian Centre for Health Information, Statistics Canada, unpublished data.

The statistics on injuries among aboriginal children indicate that, although declining, the accidental death rate among status Indian children is consistently higher than the national average. There are also variations in the causes of injuries to children on reserves, with fire being among the most prevalent hazards.

What is noteworthy about injuries to Canadian children is the degree to which they are preventable. Ensuring the availability of emergency treatment for trauma remains a priority, but it is in the understanding of how, when, where and why injuries occur that the real solutions lie.

The promotion of child safety is a responsibility that is shared by governments, industry, schools, community agencies and parents. These sectors are working together to create a network of legislation, codes, and standards covering a wide range of products and environments, which will lead to a safer environment for Canadian children.

Childhood Development

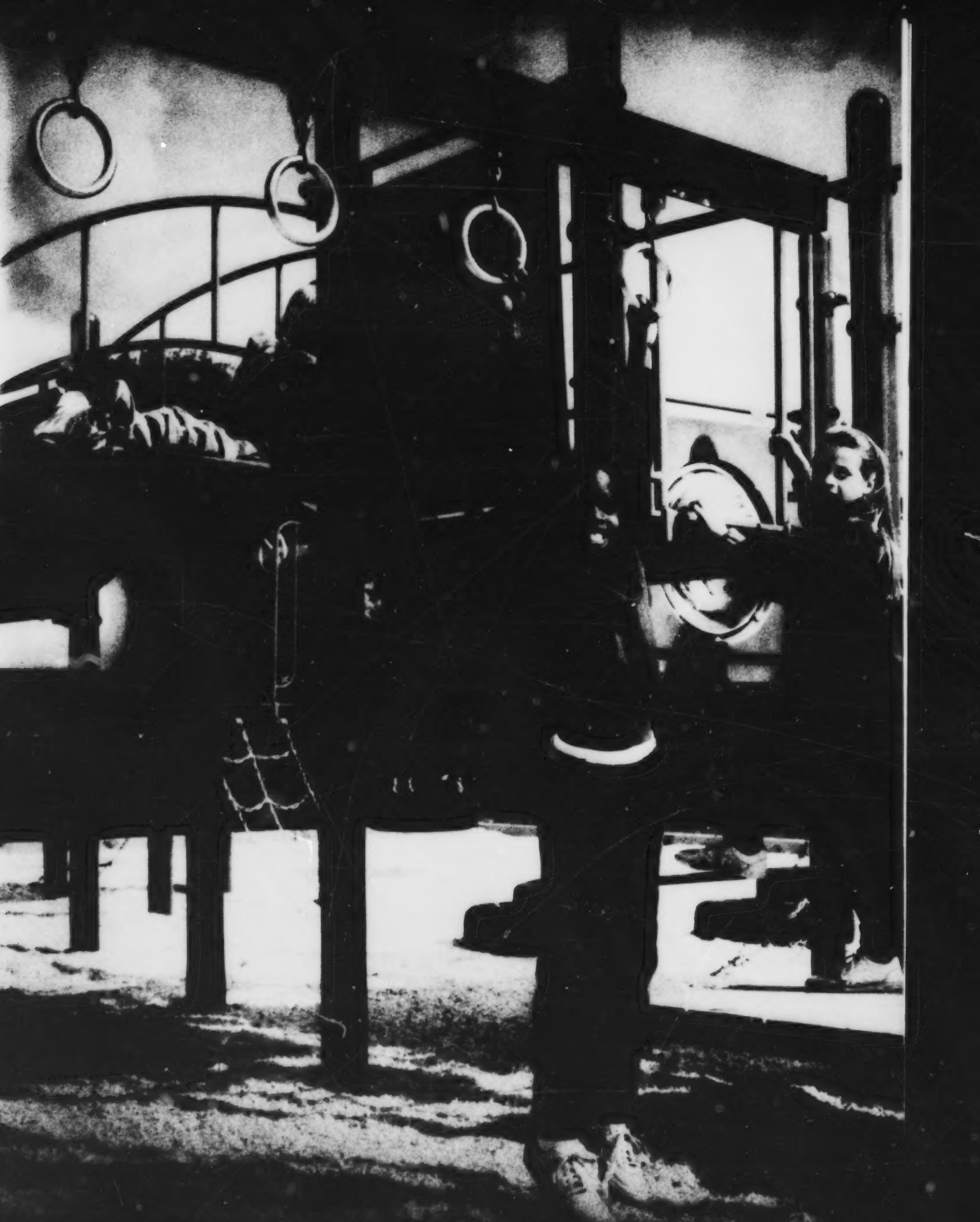
States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 31(1)

Since the implementation of child labour laws in the mid-1800s, Canada has formally recognized the right to a childhood free of exploitation for the purpose of work or monetary profit. Implicit in that early legislation was acceptance of the fact that play and recreation are important aspects of child development and are crucial to sound social, physical and emotional growth.

As Canadian society has become more urbanized, a complex infrastructure has been developed to ensure recreational opportunities. Spontaneous, self-directed play is encouraged through toys in the home and the existence of municipal playgrounds and parks. Opportunities for more structured activities are presented through play groups, nursery schools, informal parent groups, co-operatives and community programs.

Organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, the Scouting and Guiding movement, 4H Clubs and YM-YWCAs also make a valuable contribution to safe recreation and leisure by providing comprehensive programs of social, sporting and recreational activities and events.



In licensed child-care centres, regulations ensure that a portion of each child's day is devoted to physical activity and recreation. Elementary schools are likewise mandated to provide their students with physical education programs and the opportunity for a recess from their studies during the school day. These daily activities are supplemented by a vast number of discretionary recreational sports, many offered without cost through schools or community associations.

In the late 1960s, interest in the level of physical fitness of Canadian school children led to the development of a Canada Fitness Awards Program. Through their schools, more than one million students participate annually in challenging various standards of athletic and physical competence. More that 22 million young people have been involved with the program since its inception.

Both boys and girls enjoy a wide variety of activities. The growing emphasis on the development of athletic skills that can be practiced on a lifelong basis has popularized bicycling, swimming, jogging, squash, skiing, tennis and, in recent years, aerobics, dance and outdoor pursuits.

Nevertheless, traditional team sports such as soccer, football, basketball, and hockey are still commonly played, particularly by boys. Competitive sport, however, has evolved to encompass the concept of "fair play", which encourages involvement in sport for fun and social benefit rather than for the sole desire of winning.

Participation in sport is now being encouraged among children as much for its enhancement of self-esteem, sense of belonging through social interaction, and feeling of control over their lives as it is for the improvement in their physical well-being. This represents a change in the perception of exercise primarily as a mechanical activity that enhances a child's physical development to a more holistic approach that encourages total health and maturity.

Despite the range of efforts and opportunities that encourage physical activity and recreation among children, there is evidence of a dramatic decline in fitness levels as young people move into adolescence. Beginning in the teen years, other factors such as part-time work, few compulsory school physical education programs, increased numbers of hours watching television and peer socialization contribute to reduced physical fitness.

The mental and social well-being of children has as significant an impact on their lives as their physical health.

Children who are nurtured and supported throughout childhood are likely to become nurturing, supportive parents. Adults who are adequately supported while parenting are better equipped to provide a secure environment in which children can develop self-esteem, independence and self-reliance.

All children in society are faced with varying levels of stress which may be related to rapid social changes, such as shifts in values, technology, the economy and family composition. Additional stress from cross-cultural and ethnic value clashes are also of concern to aboriginal and multi-cultural communities, particularly refugees and immigrants.

Children change rapidly as they make the transition from childhood to adulthood. Many adapt successfully as they move from one stage to the next with competence, while others experience difficulties.

Some manifestations of difficulties include mental disturbances, disorders and suicide. In Canada, suicide is the second leading cause of death among adolescents, accounting for 15% of all deaths. Young men commit suicide more often but young women attempt suicide more frequently. Of particular note is the incidence of suicide among aboriginal children and youth. Between 1980 and 1984, the suicide rate for aboriginal persons aged between ten and 19 was seven times higher than the average Canadian rate for the same age group.

Most children emerge from stressful home environments or troubled backgrounds and succeed in overcoming the effects of those pressures. This suggests that the reduction of mental and emotional disturbances and self-destructive habits in later life may well be achieved through early intervention and the teaching of skills that prepare children to cope with challenges in childhood and in adolescence. For example, efforts by the Government of Canada to discourage habits such as the use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs focus on empowering young people to resist peer pressure and make their own healthier choices.

Education

Since the days when lessons were delivered in one-room schoolhouses, Canadians have placed a high premium on a formal education. Thus, at about the age of five or six, Canadian children enter the world of classrooms, teachers, and textbooks in the hope that they will emerge as more capable and productive individuals. The school years encompass a significant period in a child's development. The experiences encountered there, both intellectually and socially, shape each child.

Canada's commitment to education can be seen in the approximately $43.5 billion in government and non-government funds that were devoted to education in 1989–90. Of that, $27.6 billion was allocated to elementary and secondary education, $8.9 billion to universities, $3.6 billion to community colleges and $3.4 billion to vocational training.

According to the Constitution, the provinces and territories are responsible for education. The federal government provides substantial financial assistance to the provincial and territorial governments for post-secondary education, it sponsors the development of co-operative education programs and, through federal skills training programs, provides assistance for adult vocational training. The federal government is also directly responsible for the education of certain groups of persons. The Department of National Defence operates programs in Canada and overseas for Armed Forces personnel and their dependants. The Department of Indian and Northern Affairs is in charge of education for Indian children on reserves, and the Solicitor General for inmates of federal correctional institutions.

Although each province and territory operates its own autonomous school system, mechanisms for consultations among provinces have been established in recent years. Key among these is the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada which provides a forum for the provinces and territories to discuss educational matters of mutual concern and to work together on a broad range of activities at the elementary, secondary and post-secondary levels. The Council also considers issues involving the federal government, such as post-secondary education and the use of Canada's two official languages, English and French, in schools. Among the Council's many concerns is the co-ordination of projects that will increase the accessibility and consistency of information about education.

States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:
a) make primary education compulsory and available free to all;
b) encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;
c) make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;
d) make education and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;
e) take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 28(1)

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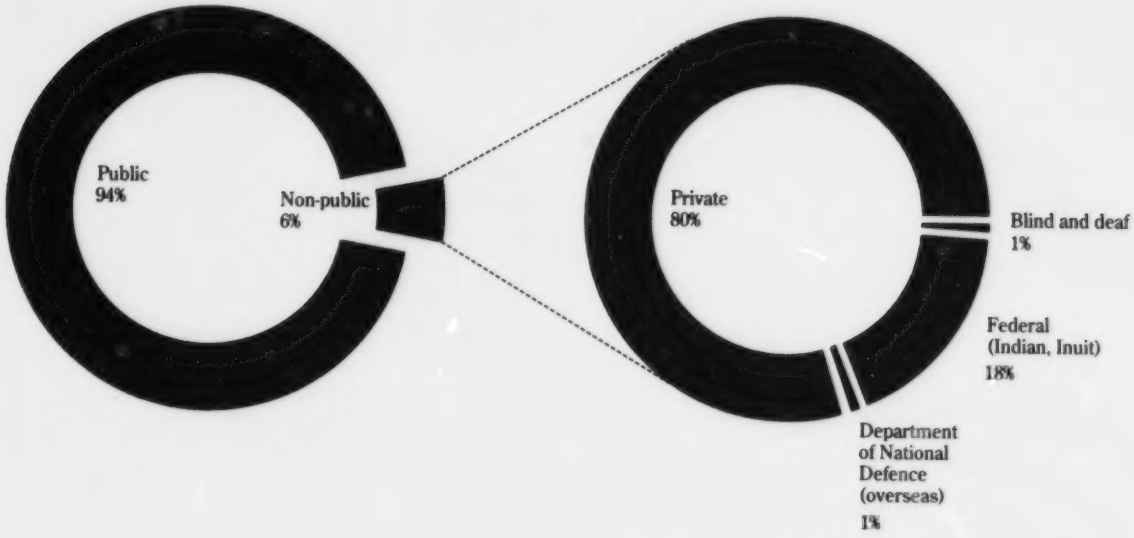
In 1989–90, over five million students attended elementary and secondary schools in Canada. They were instructed by 280,000 teachers in more than 15,000 elementary and secondary schools organized under 880 public and private school boards. Although the number of students attending Canadian schools declined somewhat during the 1970s and 1980s, indications are that the 1990s will see an increase in enrolment.

In 1987–88, 94% of Canadian children were enroled in publicly supported school systems while 6% were enroled in private and federal schools.

Percentage distribution of enrolment of children, by type of school, Canada, 1987–88



Source: Elementary-Secondary School Enrolment, 1987–88, Statistics Canada, Catalogue 81-210.

Changing Needs

Children growing up in Canada today live in a society that is markedly different from that of their parents and grandparents. Adapting the education system to meet their future needs is an ongoing process.

At the same time, schools have become agents for services that were not previously considered within the realm of education. The provision of before- and after-school care for children of working parents and the accommodation of public health and lifestyle issues within educational curricula have expanded the mandate of schools beyond their original role.

With the expansion of the definition and objectives of education, the involvement of others in the educational process is becoming increasingly common. Recent collaboration between levels of government, educational institutions, associations and the private sector has produced school-based initiatives that relate to issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, cross-cultural understanding, gender stereotyping in schools and educational materials, literacy, sexuality, early school-leaving, and the transition from school to work.

Children are being encouraged to consider career options at a much earlier point in their education. To that end, various programs have been introduced into the schools that are designed to increase students' understanding of working life and the educational requirements needed to meet specific goals.

An estimated 30% of secondary school students in Canada, many of whom come from lower-income families, will leave school before graduation, limiting their employment skills and qualifications. In a direct effort to address their needs and those of students at risk of following their example, the federal government, through the Minister of State for Youth and Employment and Immigration Canada, has recently established the $296.4 million "National Stay-in-School Initiative". Through public awareness, the mobilization of community partners and labour market programs and services directed at in-school youth, the government hopes to redress some of the factors that lead young people to abandon their education before they are adequately prepared to realize their full personal and professional potential.

Canada is concerned that the literacy skills of early school leavers are significantly lower than those of high school graduates. While most children in Canada learn the basics of reading and mathematics in the early grades, many do not incorporate reading as a part of their routine activities. Consequently, children are being encouraged to value reading as both a learning and recreational activity.

The way learning is approached in Canada is also evolving. Children in many classrooms are being encouraged to advance at their own pace through a learner-centred approach, where individual differences in ability are accommodated through more individualized teaching strategies.

Programs are also available for children with special needs, whether arising from a physical or learning disability or from an exceptional intellectual, artistic or athletic talent. The majority of children with special needs are integrated with other students in the classroom, or grouped in a special class within a regular school. This instills a greater sensitivity among students to the needs and potential of those who are disadvantaged.

The standard curriculum of Canadian schools has undergone a marked change in recent years, with the teaching of basic subjects such as reading, writing and mathematics being supplemented by the learning of communication, coping and computation skills. School curricula also include the promotion of children's mental and physical well-being through a growing emphasis on physical fitness, good nutrition and safety as well as through the increased interaction between schools and social service agencies.

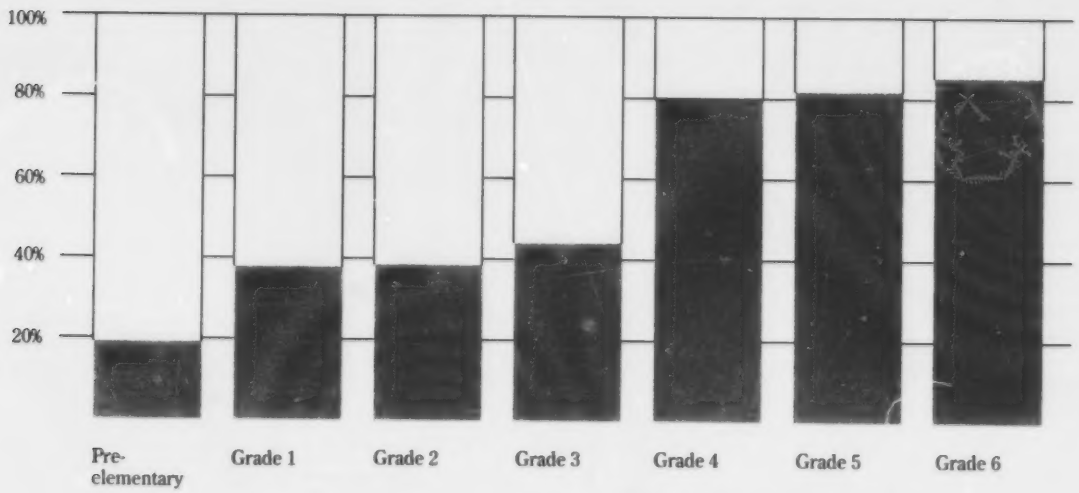
Comparing a classroom today to that of a decade ago, the most notable addition is the computer terminal. The use of computers as learning tools is increasingly popular among teachers and students. Greater attention is being focused on the fields of entrepreneurship, science and technology. This emphasis is partly fuelled by Canada's need to develop technological skills in its workforce if it is to compete successfully in the world economy. Similarly, more girls are being encouraged to study science, mathematics and technology to help prepare for future careers, although girls continue to be underrepresented in these disciplines.

Recognizing the power of education to alter values and directions, many school boards have incorporated environmental studies into their compulsory curricula. As supported by UNESCO, there is general consensus that environmental education must be integrated throughout all curricula, rather than as an addition to existing programs.

Among the notable advances attributed to the education system in Canada is the equipping of young people with the skills that allow them to function in both of Canada's official languages.

In 1987–88, the participation rates of children outside Quebec in second language programs was 19.1% at the pre-elementary level, increasing steadily to 86.2% in Grade 6.

Participation rates in second language programs, by grade*, Canada, 1987–88



* Data for Quebec are excluded from this graph because English is compulsory in the French school system for all students in Quebec.

Source: Minority and Second Language Education, Elementary and Secondary Levels, 1987–88, Statistics Canada, Catalogue 81-257.

Heritage language programs are also growing in popularity. In 1988–89, more than 130,000 children were engaged outside of regular classtime in learning more than 55 different languages in Heritage Language Supplementary Schools. Thousands more were enroled in heritage language programs offered in public and private schools across Canada.

Those facing the greatest challenge in education are aboriginal persons. Although the level of education among aboriginal persons is increasing, the 1986 census indicated that 37% of Indians of strictly North American origin have less than a grade 9 education, almost double the rate of the Canadian population.

Awareness of some of the factors that have influenced this situation has led to a movement toward greater community control of Indian education. The result is both better management of the education of Indian children on reserves and the development of culturally and linguistically appropriate school curricula. The proportion of children enroled in schools operated by Indian bands is also increasing, while the enrolment of Indian children in provincial and federal schools is showing a corresponding decline.

The further integration of culturally sensitive programs into the mainstream education system and the gradual movement toward Indian control of Indian education are viewed as the best ways to provide quality education and narrow the gap in educational levels between aboriginal people and the general population. Although many challenges and the legacy of past practices remain, aboriginal educators are hopeful that the interests of aboriginal children will be much better served by the Canadian educational system in the years to come.

Economic Security

A job is the best source of economic security in Canada and income from parental employment is the primary means of economic security for children. In 1988, 88% of children under age 16 lived in families whose major source of income was employment earnings, either from wages and salaries or income from self-employment.

Federal, provincial and territorial governments have focused efforts on sustaining a level of economic growth and providing educational and training opportunities which will ensure jobs for Canadians in all parts of the country. Since 1984, 1.6 million new jobs have been created in Canada; 80% of them are full-time.

Over time, Canada has developed a network of programs that help Canadians, including families with children, maintain an adequate level of economic security. Some of these programs include:

- Family Allowances, paid by the federal government to a parent or guardian for all children in Canada under age 18. Quebec also provides an additional Family Allowance for families with children;
- A Refundable Child Tax Credit that provides income-tested assistance, through the income tax system, to families with children in addition to the universal Family Allowances;
- A supplement to the Refundable Child Tax Credit for families with a child or children under age seven;
- A Non-Refundable Child Tax Credit and a Child Care Expense Deduction;
- A federal Unemployment Insurance program which provides income protection for workers experiencing employment interruptions due to unemployment, sickness, birth or adoption of a child, and retirement;
- Earnings-related Canada and Quebec Pension Plans, which provide a variety of benefits, including payments for the children of disabled or deceased contributors;
- A universal health insurance system, legislated, administered and funded by the provinces and territories, with federal contributions, which provides full coverage to all residents of Canada for medically necessary hospital and physician's services;
- Federal and provincial employment programs and services, which facilitate reintegration and participation in the paid labour force;

States Parties recognize the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 27(1)

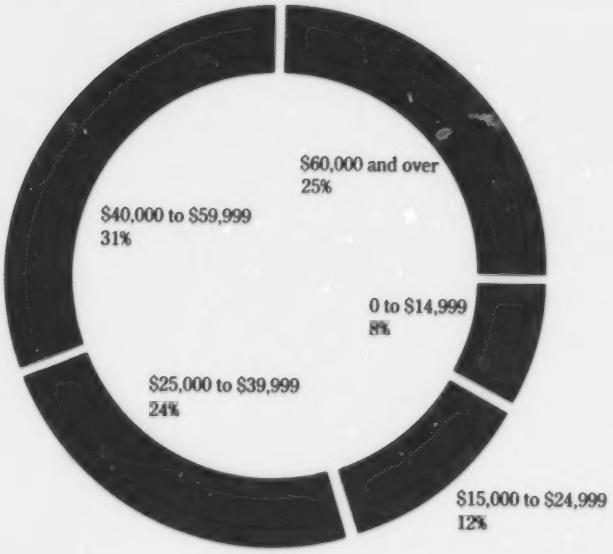
- Social assistance programs, legislated and administered by the provinces and cost-shared with the federal government through the Canada Assistance Plan, which ensure a minimum level of income to all eligible persons including families with children;
- A system of federal and provincial/territorial government housing programs, many cost-shared, which provide subsidized housing to low-income families;
- Income-tested supplements for working-poor families with children in Manitoba, Quebec and Saskatchewan;
- Provincial allowances paid in Quebec for children with disabilities and for newborns and children under age six.

Canada devotes billions of dollars directly and indirectly to children through these programs each year.

The majority of Canada's children live in families whose incomes are sufficient to provide a comfortable standard of living. In 1988, the average income of families with children under age 18 was about $47,000.

Over one-half (56%) of children under age 18 lived in families with incomes above $40,000 and 80% were in families with incomes over $25,000 in 1988.

Distribution of children under 18, by family income, Canada, 1988



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances, 1989.

Average family income in Canada has seen a marked improvement over the past two decades. The amount of the increase has varied with the type of family (two-parent or lone-parent) but, on average, all families have seen substantial real increases. The average family income of two-parent families (denoted in 1988 dollars which have been adjusted for inflation) rose by 66.2% between 1967 and 1988, from $31,835 to $52,912. Male lone-parent families with children averaged $26,398 in 1967 and $41,037 in 1988, a real increase of 55.5%. Female lone-parent families with children saw a 26.9% real increase in average income, from $18,609 in 1967 to $24,125 in 1988. Over the last two decades, the increased participation of women in the paid labour force has resulted in the presence of a second earner in many families and, consequently, an improved level of economic security for families with children.

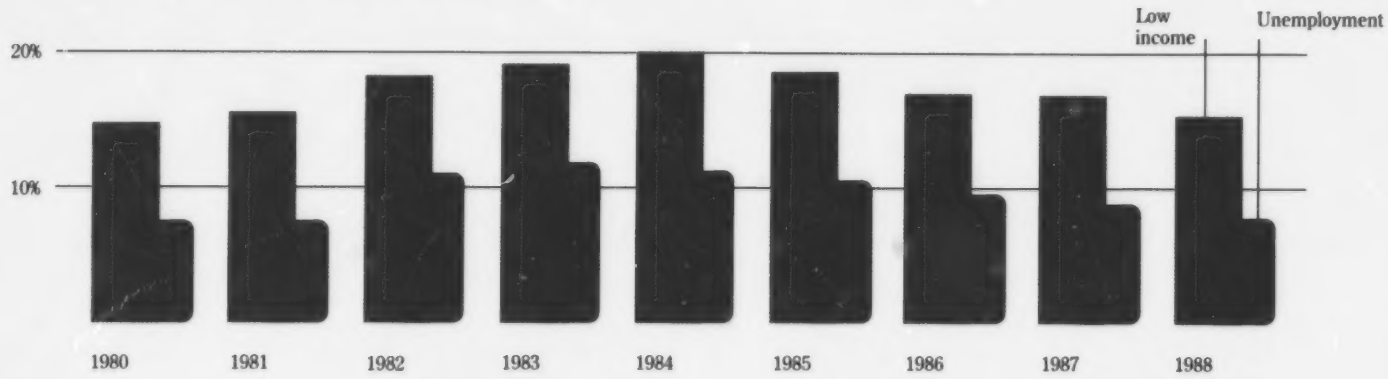
The majority of Canadian children are economically secure. Nevertheless, many children face the reality of low income. There are no official poverty lines in Canada. Statistics Canada's low-income cut-offs represent one measure which is useful in tracking trends in the incidence of low income over time and comparing the rates of low income among different groups in Canada. The low-income cut-offs reflect consumption patterns of Canadian families; those spending on average 58.5% or more of their income on food, clothing and shelter are considered to have low incomes. The low-income cut-offs vary according to size of family and community. For example, the low-income cut-off for a family of four people living in an area with a population of 500,000 or more was $23,528 in 1988.

The information on low-income children in this report is based on Statistics Canada's 1978 base low-income cut-offs for 1988. Data are for children under age 16, unless otherwise indicated.

In 1988, 875,000 children, or one child in six, lived in low-income families. Children comprised one-quarter (26.3%) of the total low-income population in Canada. Low-income children are at increased risk of developmental difficulties, such as prematurity and low birth-weight, death during infancy, growth abnormalities, malnutrition, low self-esteem, behavioural disturbances, learning problems and fewer opportunities for recreation and cultural development.

In recent years, Canada has seen a decline in the number of low-income children, a trend which reflects improvements in the economy. The number of low-income children increased in the first half of the 1980s with the rise in unemployment during the 1981–82 recession. Since 1984, economic recovery has reduced the percentage of low-income children from 20.1% in 1984 to 15.4% of all children in 1988. There were 259,000 fewer low-income children in Canada in 1988 than in 1984.

Incidence of low income among children under 16, and national unemployment rate, 1980 to 1988



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances and Labour Force Survey, various years.

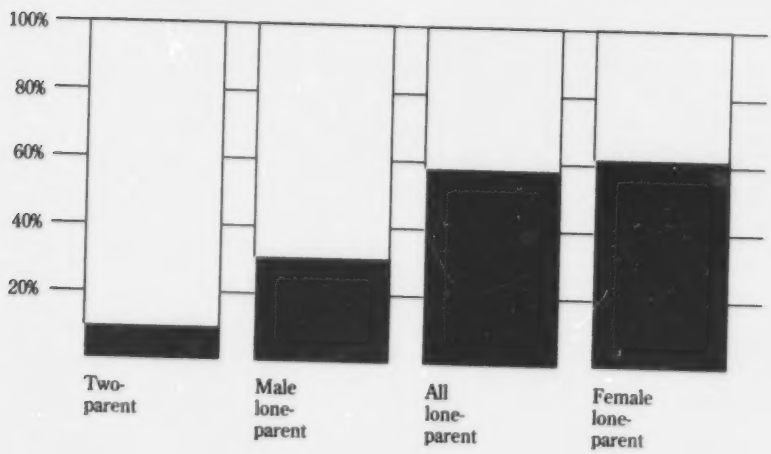
Of all children in Canada, aboriginal children face the greatest risk of living below the low-income cut-offs. They are twice as likely as other children to live in low-income families. A study by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (based on the 1986 census) found that, in 1985, 38.8% of aboriginal children under age 18 lived in low-income families compared to 18.8% of non-aboriginal children.

Several factors affect the likelihood of low income among children, including the type of family in which they live and the amount of education attained by the head of the family.

Children in two-parent families are far less likely to live on low incomes than children in lone-parent families. In 1988, 9.8% of all children in two-parent families lived below the low-income cut-offs compared to 58% of children living in lone-parent families.

In 1988, among lone-parent families, children in families led by men faced a lower risk of low income than those headed by women. The low-income rate was 30.8% for children in male lone-parent families, compared to 61.7% for children living in female lone-parent families.

Incidence of low income among children under 16, by family type, 1988



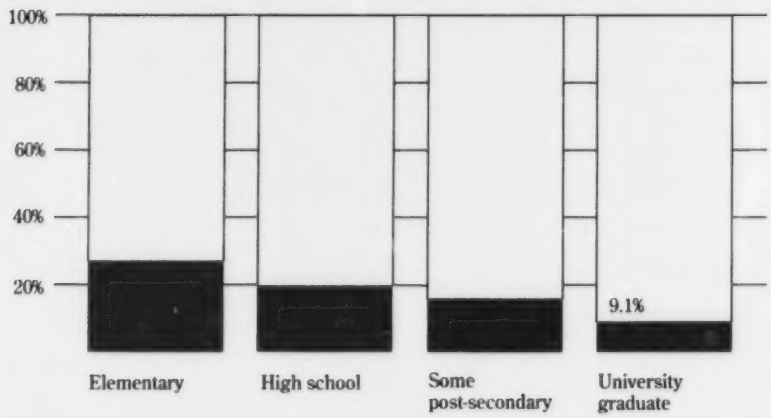
Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances, 1989.

Low income is closely linked to low education. The more education attained by the head of a family with children, the less chance it will have a low income.

In 1987, 9.1% of children in families headed by someone with a university or college diploma lived below the low-income cut-offs, compared to 27% of children living in families whose heads had less than a grade 9 education.

While the majority of Canadian children are economically secure, Canadians recognize that low income is a reality for too many children. Canada remains committed to ensuring economic security for all children. Its social and economic policies are steadily reducing the number of low-income children.

Incidence of low income among children under 16, by education of family head, 1987



Source: Statistics Canada, Survey of Consumer Finances, 1988.

Care, Support and Protection

Child Care

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that children of working parents have the right to benefit from child care services and facilities for which they are eligible.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 18(3)

In Canada, it is accepted that parents are responsible for the care and raising of their children. However, in recent years, new patterns of family structures and the increased participation of women in the labour force have made it difficult for many parents to provide care unaided by society. Child care services, where the primary care of the child is, on an hourly or daily basis, provided by someone other than a parent, have become a greater necessity as parents, particularly lone parents, juggle their domestic and professional responsibilities. It is therefore of utmost concern that these child care services be affordable, accessible and of high quality.

According to the Constitution, the provision of child care services falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and territories. In some provinces, that authority has subsequently been delegated to local municipalities.

A wide range of support services is available to help meet the needs and preferences of Canadian parents. Child care is available in both licensed and unlicensed sectors. The licensed child care sector is regulated by provincial and territorial governments and must meet their standards in such areas as health and safety, group size, available space and child/staff ratios. Day care centres and family day care homes operated on a for-profit or non-profit basis by organizations and individuals fall within this category. The unlicensed child care sector is not regulated by government and consists of friends, relatives, nannies, neighbours and babysitters.

Since 1973, when the National Child Care Information Centre began publishing statistics on the number of licensed full-time day care spaces available in Canada, there has been, with few exceptions, a 10 to 16% increase each year in the number of available spaces. A total of 298,083 spaces now exist in licensed facilities.

The availability of licensed child care services varies according to the age of the child. As in the past, the majority of day care centre spaces are available to children aged three to six; they now account for 61% of the total day care centre spaces. About 13% of day care centre spaces were available to children under age three in 1989. After-school care programs for school-age children have grown considerably and now constitute 25% of the total day care spaces.

Financial support for child care services by the provincial and territorial governments varies according to their circumstances and priorities. The federal government is also involved in the financing of child care. Through the Canada Assistance Plan (CAP) the federal government shares eligible provincial and territorial expenditures on day care services for low-income families with children. In 1989–90, the federal government spent an estimated $240 million on day care through CAP. The Child Care Expense Deduction in the income tax system allows families to deduct from income receipted, work-related child care expenses up to a maximum of $4,000 per child under age seven (and for children with special needs) and $2,000 per child aged seven to fourteen. In addition, the Child Care Initiatives Fund provides financial support for the research and development of innovative approaches to the delivery of child care in Canada. The federal government is committed to the establishment of a national child care program by 1993.

Support for parents and families in Canada has been reflected through other government policies as well. Provincial, territorial and federal legislation ensures every woman's right to at least 17 weeks of unpaid pregnancy leave; in practice, this guarantees that a woman will be reinstated in her job following a leave of absence surrounding childbirth. The *Canada Labour Code* entitles employees working under federal jurisdiction who are responsible for the care of newborn or newly adopted children to an additional unpaid leave of absence of up to 24 weeks. (The majority of employees in Canada are covered by provincial legislation; federal public servants have access to parental leave under separate legislation or collective agreements.)

Further, maternity and adoption benefits are available under the national Unemployment Insurance (UI) program. Eligible women (and fathers under certain circumstances) may receive up to 15 weeks of maternity benefits worth 60% of their average weekly insurable earnings, up to a maximum weekly benefit while absent from work. UI adoption benefits are also payable for a maximum of 15 weeks to either parent wishing to stay home to care for a newly adopted child. Legislation to expand these benefits is now before Parliament.

Other Canadian employees may be eligible for additional pregnancy leave, parental leave or benefits according to employers' policies or collective agreements between employers and unions. Support for employees with child care responsibilities is also provided by some employers through flexible work schedules, employer-sponsored day care or referrals to child care services.

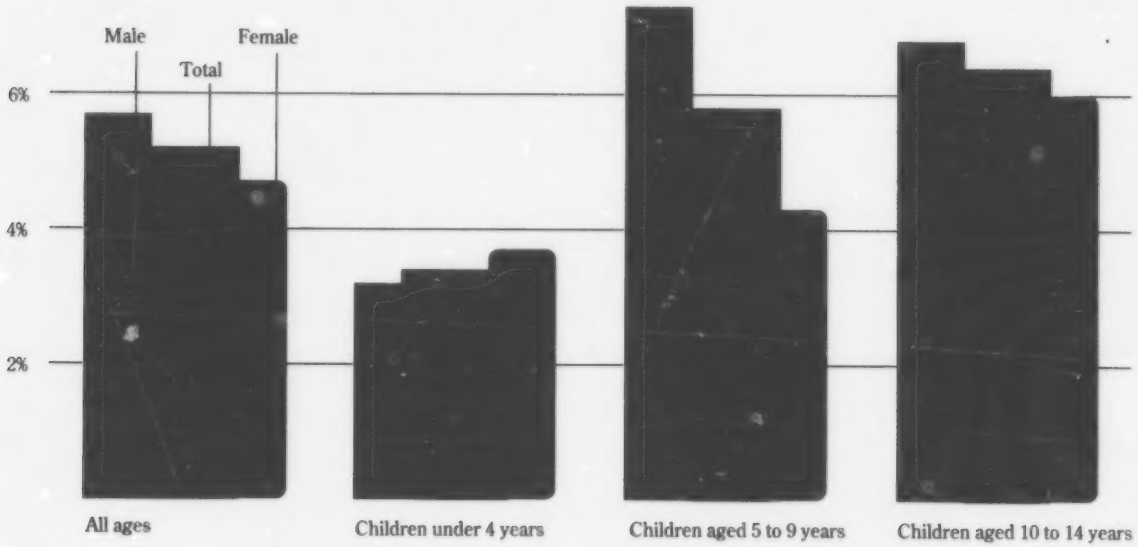
Children with Disabilities

In 1986–87, about one child in 20 residing in households or institutions had some sort of disability. The rate was slightly higher for boys (5.7%) than for girls (4.7%). Boys aged five to nine had the highest overall rate at 7.3% while the lowest incidence occurred among boys aged zero to four (3.2%). The latter group was the only one in which the rate for girls (3.7%) exceeded that of boys. Most children with disabilities live at home.

States Parties recognize that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 23(1)

Disability rates for children under 15, by age group and sex, Canada, 1986–87



Source: The Health and Activity Limitation Survey, Statistics Canada, Catalogue 82-602.

Children with disabilities have special needs arising from their physical, mental, emotional, sensory or learning impairment. They all share one common need: to experience the pleasures enjoyed by other children and to participate in the playgrounds, schools, camps, sports teams, choirs and clubs open to all other children.

Concerted efforts are being made to ensure that children with disabilities have the opportunity and are encouraged to realize their full potential. They know that a disability need not prevent them from extraordinary achievement. All Canadians were inspired by Rick Hansen, who, as a 25-year-old paraplegic, successfully completed an around-the-world "Man in Motion" tour by wheelchair. Terry Fox, who, despite the loss of a leg to cancer, still attempted to run a "Marathon of Hope" across Canada, has been another shining example of courage to Canadian children. For many children with disabilities, the Special Olympics provide an opportunity to reach their highest possible athletic potential.

Given the proper opportunities, all children with disabilities are capable of meeting immense challenges. What they require most is a chance to be included – to play and learn like other Canadian children. Their needs vary. Many children require specialized equipment to help them move and communicate more effectively. Others require assistance in learning the basic skills of speaking, reading and writing. Still others require help in adjusting to a classroom situation or learning to get along with peers.

Inclusion can, to some extent, be achieved through the enactment of laws that give all children, including those with disabilities, the right to full participation. To this end, provincial laws allow children with special needs to attend regular schools.

The establishment of standards, particularly in national building codes, that require "barrier-free design" in the construction of public buildings and infrastructure also assist in integration. This means modifying curbs, stairways, narrow entrances, difficult-to-grasp doorknobs and high elevator buttons that make it difficult, if not impossible, for children with physical disabilities.

As part of the support offered to families with disabled children, funds are available to defray the cost of converting their homes to accommodate their child's special needs. Provincial, territorial and municipal governments also assist in financing efforts to modify the construction of schools, libraries, sports arenas, pools and other public facilities to ensure that physically challenged children, as well as the elderly and toddlers, can be present and active in their communities.

The fact that most Canadian children with disabilities live at home with their parents has led to a variety of services being provided directly to families. Children may be instructed at home in life skills such as eating, grooming and communicating. Counselling services help children and families cope with emotional stress. Respite services allow families some opportunity for rest. Provincial governments offer programs that provide equipment or cash assistance to offset disability-related costs, while the federal government provides indirect assistance through tax credits.

Despite the range of services currently in place, there are children whose needs are multiple and complex. Assisting children who live in rural areas, children with multiple disabilities, children whose special needs such as learning difficulties may be hard to identify and children for whom traditional services are inappropriate to their ethnic or cultural background requires innovative responses.

Canada has addressed some of the needs of persons who are disabled through the creation of a Secretariat on the Status of Disabled Persons and a Committee of Parliament on the Status of Disabled Persons. In signing the *Convention on the Rights of the Child,* Canada has made a particular commitment to promote the dignity, self-esteem and participation of children with disabilities.

Child Protection

States Parties undertake to ensure the child such protection and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.

Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 3(2)

Parents have a moral obligation and a legal responsibility to provide for, protect and nurture their children.

All parents want to provide the best possible care for each child, but some experience difficulty in fulfilling their parenting role, whether due to stress arising from financial pressures, an illness or disability, marital breakdown, a death in the family or problems at work.

Canada has a wide variety of services that support and assist families in difficult times. Family service agencies, child welfare agencies and other community services offer counselling; practical assistance is available through homemakers who instruct the family in basic household management such as meal preparation and child care. It is estimated that 250,000 children are helped annually through these forms of support and intervention.

Major efforts by Indians, federal, provincial and territorial governments have led to the establishment of aboriginal-designed and -managed child and family services on reserves. Such services are more culturally appropriate and focus on prevention and providing additional support to families. Work is under way to expand and fund these agencies so all Indian children and their families on reserves can access services.

When the stresses on parents are so serious as to cause temporary or permanent breakdown of the family, and where it is determined that the situation is harmful or destructive to the safety or welfare of the child, legislation provides for the relinquishment of parental responsibility to the State on a temporary or permanent basis. In determining this custodial responsibility, the guiding principle is the best interest of the child.

Throughout Canada, child welfare services provide substitute care for children, usually through foster homes, or permanent arrangements through adoption, to help ensure that children are cared for properly. Provincial laws govern these protection services; their costs are shared with the federal government under the Canada Assistance Plan. In 1988–89, federal expenditures under the Plan for child welfare services were $549 million.

Child welfare services also provide protection for children who have been abused. Child abuse crosses all economic, geographic and cultural lines. It is a complex problem which may include physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, neglect and exploitation.

The fact that most abusers are known to the victims creates a serious breach of trust, especially for children who are dependent upon adults for their physical and emotional well-being. The emotional damage that can result from abuse is as serious as the physical scars that may be inflicted. Recent evidence suggests that many of the victims of child abuse are at high risk of becoming abusers themselves.

The abuse of children in Canada is regulated by both the federal Criminal Code and by provincial/territorial legislation. There has been a trend toward the criminalization of child abuse, particularly of child sexual abuse, which has been the subject of criminal law reform in the last two years. Federal laws set out the punishments, which vary according to the nature of the offence and the age of the victim. Provincial child welfare laws protect children who have been abused at home by investigating all situations of actual or suspected abuse and by removing children from abusive situations when required. Most abused children and their families are offered counselling and other support services.

Concerted efforts are now under way to address the problem of child sexual abuse. In 1986, the federal government established a Family Violence Prevention Division which has child sexual abuse as a priority. Its purpose is to raise awareness, to provide funds for research into treatment and prevention and to co-ordinate national activities in the areas of law enforcement, criminal justice, health and social services. The Minister of National Health and Welfare's Special Adviser on Child Sexual Abuse has recently recommended further federal initiatives to reduce abuse.

The reporting of child abuse is mandatory in all the provinces and territories. Teachers, physicians and other professionals as well as the population at large are obliged to report actual or suspected cases of abuse to child welfare authorities. Legislation allows for child victims to testify in court without having to do so in the presence of the accused. Training programs have been developed for lawyers and judges to improve the legal response to the problem and to minimize the trauma for children who must testify in court. The federal government, provinces and many voluntary organizations have been involved in teaching children about sexual abuse and how they can protect themselves from potentially abusive situations. Specialized training and education for frontline criminal justice personnel has also facilitated the identification of children and youth at risk and potential abusers. A myriad of community treatment programs and self-help groups are available to victims, their families and offenders across Canada.

Child welfare services and criminal laws are important for safeguarding the security of children. There is, however, growing recognition of the need to intervene in abusive situations at an earlier stage. A wide range of programs throughout the country now focuses upon the prevention of abuse.

Immigration of Children

The importance that Canada attaches to the family is reflected in the spirit of its immigration policy. In recognizing the family as a unit for the purpose of immigration, Canadian policy is designed to assist in the immigration of the united family and to facilitate the reunion of permanent residents and Canadian citizens with close relatives from abroad.

Immigrant children may either arrive in Canada in the company of their parents or may be sponsored after their parents are established. In either case, admission is based solely on the family relationship, bypassing the detailed screening process used to select other immigrants, and requires only that the child meet public health and security standards. Over the past decade, family members (spouses, parents and dependents) who either accompany the applicant or are sponsored have represented, on average, 60% of the total number of immigrants to Canada each year.

. . . applications by a child or his or her parents to enter or leave a State Party for the purpose of family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane and expeditious manner.

Convention on the Rights of the Child
Article 10(1)

Children in Need of Families

Children who have been orphaned or abandoned may be eligible for immigration to Canada. Many Canadians are eager to adopt these children and some non-governmental organizations are willing to sponsor them for resettlement. Canadian policy, in keeping with international convention, emphasizes the best interest of the child rather than the desire of the adoptive parents when determining whether to allow a foreign adoption.

In 1986, in response to increased attention on the treatment of abandoned or orphaned children, the United Nations General Assembly issued the *Declaration on the Social and Legal Principles relating to the Protection and Welfare of Children, with Special Reference to Foster Placement and Adoption Nationally and Internationally.* In 1989, those principles were incorporated into the *Convention on the Rights of the Child.*

The Government of Canada is undertaking a number of initiatives consistent with the spirit and intent of the United Nations principles. Health and Welfare Canada's National Adoption Desk, established in 1975, provides co-ordination and consulting services to the provinces and territories in matters related to international adoptions, and is involved in establishing on-going international adoption programs with governments or approved agencies in other countries. It also assists in the placement of many children from countries with which Canada has no adoption programs.

Furthermore, Canada has joined the International Organization for Migration, which is dedicated to the organized transfer of refugees, displaced persons and other people compelled to leave their homeland, as well as the transfer of orphaned or abandoned children.

Canada is also active in the international harmonization of private international law, under the auspices of The Hague Conference on Private International Law, to ensure uniform enforcement of the protection of children. First, Canada is a party to the *Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*, which establishes a system and procedures for the prompt return of abducted children. Second, Canada is participating in the elaboration of a convention on intercountry adoption which will seek to eliminate trafficking in children and fraudulent adoptions.

Canada is also reviewing immigration regulations and procedures with provincial authorities which have jurisdictional responsibilities and expertise with respect to adoption in order to enhance its ability to protect children adopted abroad.

In all these measures, Canada adheres to the principle stated in the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* that intercountry adoption may be considered as an alternative means of child care if the child cannot be placed in a foster or adoptive family, or cannot be cared for in a suitable manner, within the child's country of origin. It recognizes that adoption outside the country of a child's origin may not necessarily be the ideal solution, but should circumstances arise which favour such an option, programs and policies have been established that ensure protection of the interests of both adoptive parents and child.

Immigration of Refugee Children

There are approximately 15 million refugees in the world today. Half are children under age 15. Unlike immigrants who choose to leave their homes, refugees are driven by factors beyond their control – war, natural disaster, fear of persecution. For children, the refugee experience can be particularly traumatic. In addition to being torn from familiar surroundings, they may become separated from their parents or orphaned. Some are left without proper food or shelter, vulnerable to malnutrition and disease.

Canadian refugee policy is designed to provide assistance, through resettlement, to those most in need of protection and able to adapt to life in Canada. Although Canada does not currently have programs designed specifically for refugee children, persons under age 18 constitute a significant proportion of the total number of refugees accepted for resettlement in Canada in any given year. In 1989, more than 9,800 refugee children arrived in Canada, many in the company of their parents, and a few on their own or in the care of more distant relatives.

For Canada, as for the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the ultimate criterion in determining the placement of refugee children is the child's best interest. In keeping with the spirit of Canadian policy on the adoption of foreign children, Canada does not facilitate the admission to Canada of children for whom an alternative solution such as adoption by a member of the extended family or within their own country exists. Only in a situation of last resort will Canada consider admission of that child as an immigrant to this country.

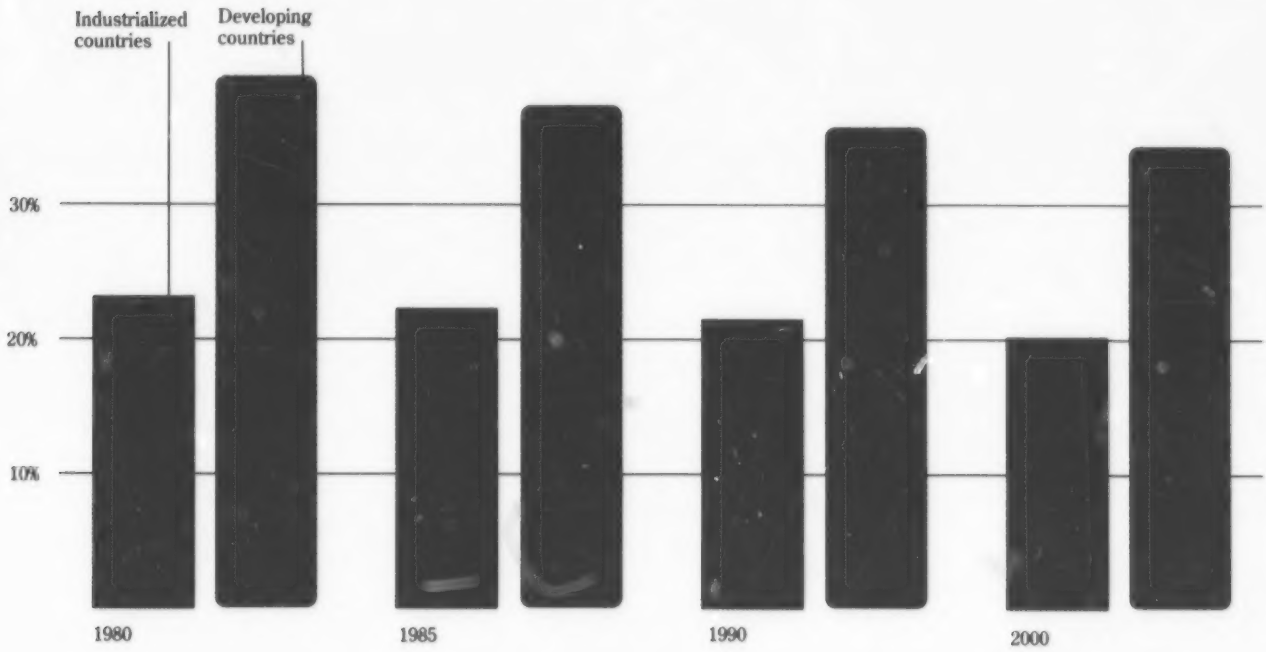
Canada's International Assistance for Children

More than three-quarters of the world's children – 1.4 billion people under age 15 – live in the developing nations of Africa, Asia and Latin America. In most of these countries, children represent a high proportion of the population, more than one in three persons, compared with one in five in Canada. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the region with the highest population growth, children under age 15 make up 45 to 50% of the population.

Only a portion of the developing world's children enjoy the right to good health and a quality education that is taken for granted in developed countries. Although parents around the world may share the same dreams and aspirations for their children, opportunities and risks vary tremendously. A critical determinant in developing nations is the extent of poverty and inequality.

According to United Nations data, severe poverty affects the lives of 45% of children under age five in the developing world (excluding China), or about 155 million children.

Child population under age 15, as a percentage of total population, in industrialized and developing countries, 1980 to 2000



Source: Population Studies, No. 106, World Population Prospects 1988, United Nations, New York, 1989.

Canada's Official Development Assistance (ODA) program is designed to help developing countries achieve self-sustaining development through their own efforts. The primary purpose of Canada's aid, as expressed in the government's ODA Charter, is to help the poorest countries and people help themselves. As part of this effort, Canada has spent nearly $2 billion in programs benefitting children over the past five years. Canada recognizes that children are the first victims of poverty. Children are a key to a country's future development.

Most of Canada's program is administered by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). External Affairs and International Trade, Health and Welfare Canada and other departments and agencies such as the International Development Research Centre participate in bilateral and multilateral agreements with other countries covering exchange visits, training programs and research and technological cooperation in health and social fields benefitting children.

The sections below describe some examples of Canada's development assistance programs pertaining to children and the international context.

Child Health

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 24, provides the context for development programs in the health sector:

> *States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services . . . States Parties undertake to promote and encourage international co-operation with a view to achieving progressively the full realization of the right recognized in this article. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.*

The basic issue for children in developing countries is their survival and healthy development. Although great strides have occurred in recent decades, including a substantial lowering of infant mortality rates (deaths in the first year of life), the toll on the world's children remains high:

- Nearly 15 million children die every day from a handful of common diseases, usually exacerbated by malnutrition. In most cases, their lives could be saved by better nutrition, clean water, improved hygiene and such measures as immunization, improved maternal health care and birth spacing.

- Some three million children become seriously disabled from diseases that can be prevented by immunization. Up to half a million others die after losing their sight because of Vitamin A deficiency. Millions more suffer from iodine deficiency disorders.
- Millions of children are deprived of maternal support because 500,000 women die each year from childbirth and related causes due to the absence of trained health workers. There is a growing world population of orphans.
- Basic health care still has to be made available to 1.5 billion people.

A substantial portion of Canada's international programs for children is devoted to child health. Canada supports the provision of primary health care, pre- and post-natal services, the training of birth attendants and other health workers, promotion of breast-feeding and extension of family planning services, and the upgrading of pediatric services in hospitals and clinics.

In the Philippines, for example, Canada supports a project to extend basic health care to 15,000 impoverished families. One of Canada's projects in Latin America is aimed at strengthening perinatal services throughout the region. Child health services are being supported in numerous countries, including Bangladesh, Colombia and Thailand.

Canada is the fifth largest contributor to UNICEF, the United Nations Children's Fund, which operates programs for child survival and development in 130 countries. On a per capita basis, Canadians give more generously to UNICEF than the inhabitants of most industrialized countries. In 1989–90, Canada ranked first among donors responding to UNICEF's emergency appeals. Canada also provides core funding to the organization and additional resources for many joint projects.

Support to national child immunization programs is an important component of Canada's health assistance. Canada has devoted over $140 million for this purpose since 1984. While many parts of this program have been implemented by UNICEF, $43 million was managed for the government by the Canadian Public Health Association. Nineteen national and six international organizations have taken part in Canada's International Immunization Program, which was launched by Prime Minister Mulroney in 1985. This unique Canadian program has contributed to the immunization of eight million children and the training of 56,000 health workers in 43 developing countries of the Commonwealth and La Francophonie. The Canadian private sector is also a supplier of vaccines.

With assistance from Canada and other industrialized countries, the developing world has vastly expanded immunization coverage in the past decade, from one-quarter of the child population covered in 1980 to three-quarters today. Polio incidence has been so sharply reduced that the disease itself may soon be eradicated. Both the World Health Organization and UNICEF estimate that over two million child deaths from measles, whooping cough and tetanus are now being prevented each year by immunization.

As in Canada but particularly in the developing world, AIDS is becoming an increasing risk to children's health. According to the World Health Organization, by 1992 four million infants will have been born to women infected with the human immunodeficiency virus. One million of these children will be likely to develop AIDS. Infant and child mortality rates are expected to rise by 30% in some areas because of AIDS. Canada is stepping up its international assistance to combat the disease, helping to fund AIDS information and prevention programs directed to both children and adults, and supporting care and counselling services for AIDS victims and orphans. Overall, Canada is the fourth largest bilateral contributor to national AIDS programs in developing countries.

Canada joined other countries to fund the research which led to the development of oral rehydration therapy, now used by millions of families to prevent or treat the dehydration caused by diarrhea that is the single most common cause of death among children under age five. This therapy is saving an estimated one million lives each year.

For many years, Canada has supported the family planning and child health services of the United Nations Population Fund. Contributions are also made to a number of other international voluntary bodies specializing in population and primary health, including the International Planned Parenthood Federation. Effective methods for spacing births are now being used by a majority of couples in Asia and Latin America, and are increasingly being adopted by couples in Africa, where population growth is highest.

Water Supply and Sanitation

Along with increased funds for health, Canada has increased its international assistance for water and sanitation in the past decade to a level of $60 million a year. With Canada's help, one million people spread over 2,500 villages in Northern Ghana now have potable drinking water. Canadian assistance helped dig wells, supplied handpumps, trained villagers in maintenance, and provided a major education program on clean water and hygiene.

Only about one-quarter of the people in Africa have access to adequate supplies of water for drinking and washing, and the number in rural areas is even smaller. Globally, 1.75 billion people are without safe drinking water. Nearly three million lack adequate sanitation. Contaminated water from unprotected sources, as well as poor hygiene, is a leading cause of infant and child mortality. Children's health also suffers when, like women, they have to carry water over long distances.

Canadian-financed projects include the rehabilitation of the water system in parts of Uganda, a country where two-thirds of the population use unprotected sources of water. The International Development Research Centre has supported research and development of indigenous, low-cost handpump technology in a number of developing countries.

Food Production and Food Aid

Despite increases in food production, which has outpaced population growth in most developing regions, 800 million people still lack sufficient food to eat. Of them, 150 million are children under age five. Hunger and malnutrition are the products of several causes, but the major cause is poverty. Many families are too poor to buy enough to eat.

Canada responds to the problem of hunger in several ways. It provides development assistance for increased food production, transportation and distribution, and for research on new and affordable food crops. In addition, as a major producer of wheat and other food staples, Canada provides food aid directly to developing countries. In 1988–89, Canada's total government-to-government food aid contributions amounted to $218 million and went to 24 countries. In addition, Canada contributed $185 million to the World Food Program and to the International Emergency Food Reserve, which together supplied food to 65 countries. Per capita, Canada is the world's largest food aid donor.

About one-third of the food supplied to the World Food Program is distributed systematically at schools and clinics. Other food goes directly to low-income families as partial payment for work done on community food-for-work projects. Government-to-government food aid is often sold on the market to generate the local currency to support social programs that benefit children.

Canada also supplies substantial amounts of food as famine relief and to feed refugees and other victims of man-made and natural disasters. Children represent at least half of those affected. Wheat, wheat flour, cooking oil, dried fish and other commodities supplied by Canada to meet the major food emergencies in 1989–90 – in Angola, Ethiopia, Mozambique, Rwanda, and Sudan, and for Afghan refugees in Pakistan – was enough to feed 452,300 people for twelve months.

Each year since the mid-1970s, Canada has provided skim milk powder and other food products to help non-governmental organizations meet emergency situations and to complement small-scale feeding programs and food-for-work projects in local communities. This food is distributed in a wide range of developing countries.

Basic Education

The *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, Article 28 (3), states that:

States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.

Although school enrolment and literacy rates have increased substantially in recent decades, 100 million children of primary school age do not attend school in the developing world. The majority of them are girls. One-third of those who do go to school will not complete the primary grades. In some countries, only a minority of children over age 10 are receiving education.

Canada sponsors numerous programs in pre-school, primary and secondary education teacher training, as well as non-formal literacy projects. In Burkina Faso, for example, Canada is financing a major project in primary education which will train teachers for rural schools, help in the design of appropriate curriculum models, and identify measures to improve school attendance by girls. This kind of aid for basic education is likely to increase in the future.

Teacher training has been an important component of Canada's international assistance for several decades. One example is the in-service training given by the Canadian Teachers' Federation with government financial support. Some 25,000 teachers in developing nations have been trained under this program since 1962. As well, a significant percentage of the 9,000 Canadian volunteers who have served in developing countries over the last 20 years have undertaken teaching assignments.

Canada sends large quantities of paper, textbooks and school books to Ghana, Jamaica and other countries where these items are in short supply. Provision of these items often makes a crucial difference in whether or not learning takes place. Kenya will be helped to double its production of primary texts in the early 1990s through a line of credit for Canadian paper.

Early childhood development is another component of Canada's assistance. Canadian specialists, supported by government funding, are helping to improve pre-school institutions in Antigua and Barbuda, India, Jordan and the Philippines. The focus is to develop high-quality, relevant programs in nursery schools and kindergartens.

Canadian non-governmental organizations support institutions developing supervised day care for young children in several countries. Courses run by one organization support centres caring for 60,000 pre-school children in Brazil.

Informal primary education and literacy programs for the poor are an important element in Third World education. Canada supports several of these ventures, including one for 3,000 landless families in Bangladesh.

Aid to Refugees

Canada contributes financially to all the major international organizations providing for the care, maintenance and protection of refugees. Including people displaced within their own countries, there are 30 million refugees in the world, over half of whom are children. These children are particularly vulnerable to the violence and trauma associated with forced migration, and to the poor health and psychological problems associated with life in refugee camps. Canada has contributed to a number of programs which support feeding and education activities in camps. In all such cases, Canada uses its influence to ensure that the needs of women and children are paramount.

Canada also provides assistance to victims of natural disasters, such as hurricanes and earthquakes, many of whom are children.

Other Projects Relevant to Children

Canada contributes financially to several United Nations and specialized inter-governmental organizations which undertake programs beneficial to children. These funds, when pooled with contributions from other countries, have a wider impact on children's lives worldwide. Receiving organizations include the United Nations Development Program, the World Health Organization and the World Bank and regional multilateral development banks.

As well, Canadian Embassies in 115 developing countries have funds at their disposal, amounting to $40 million on a global basis, to meet local requests for purchases of equipment or local supplies for schools, health clinics and similar enterprises in needy communities. Projects benefitting children directly account for at least 40% of these grants.

For the past 25 years, Canada has provided education and training to 70,000 students from developing nations and helped finance study by an equal number in their own or in third countries. Many of these studies have been in social and educational fields relevant to children. Since 1988, CIDA has doubled the number of scholarships and training awards to 12,000 a year.

Canadian Official Development Assistance expenditures directly benefiting children, by program channel, 1989–90

Total: $340 million

Humanitarian aid to refugee children and child victims of disasters
Canadian voluntary sector working with children abroad
Direct support to governments for national child health, education, etc.
Multilateral contributions for children (e.g., to UNICEF)
Food aid

Source: Canadian International Development Agency, 1990.

Canada's ODA Commitment

Canada's desire to improve the lives of the world's children is underlined by the principles and priorities expressed in its Official Development Assistance strategy. Under the Government's aid strategy, the alleviation of poverty is a Canadian priority. This implies an emphasis on basic needs such as food, water, prevention of disease and primary education, with special attention being given to vulnerable groups such as the poorest communities, women and children.

Another key priority – one that affects all aspects of the aid program – is to increase the role of women in the development process. Improved education and income for women almost always translate into increased benefits for children. The advancement of women has historically been correlated with a lowering of birth rates, a lowering of child death rates, and overall improvements in family nutrition. Since, in addition, women head one out of three households among the poor in the developing world, the survival and development of children is inextricably linked to their welfare. Canada is recognized as a leader at the international level in advocating the role of women in the development process. All Canada's assistance programs reflect this theme.

Canada's assistance strategy seeks to foster an environment that will contribute to economic growth, productive employment and long-term sustainable development. Canada supports reforms that strive to achieve this goal while being sensitive to the special needs of vulnerable groups, such as children. Canada advocates similar policies in the international lending institutions. These policies call for the maintenance or extension of social programs in such areas as health, nutrition and education targeted to vulnerable groups while economic reforms take place. As economic development occurs in Third World nations, their ability to expand the health and social programs needed by their growing child populations will rise correspondingly.

Yet another focus for Canada's aid is the promotion of development which is environmentally sound and which protects natural resources. Soil erosion, land degradation, contaminated water and population growth threaten the economic development of many developing countries and the survival of their weakest citizens. Promoting environmentally sound development helps to ensure that today's children can look forward to a secure future.

A Partnership for Children

Programs and projects are not, for the most, implemented by the Government of Canada. While the Government of Canada responds to needs identified by developing nations – by their governments, institutions and local communities – the delivery of Canada's aid is managed by Canadian firms, institutions and voluntary organizations, and international bodies.

The Canadian voluntary sector is particularly active in supporting health, water and other projects at the community level that improve the well-being of children, and in rendering assistance to children deprived of traditional family support systems, such as orphans and street children.

Several of Canada's largest non-government organizations (NGOs) in the development field are devoted exclusively to efforts that benefit children. Altogether, these child-focused organizations raise nearly $80 million a year for their overseas projects from the Canadian public. More than one quarter of a million Canadians contribute their private donations to these programs. In addition, over one million Canadian schoolchildren solicit funds for UNICEF each Halloween.

Well over 40,000 Canadians are estimated to be actively involved in the work of Canadian development NGOs, primarily as volunteers. In addition, many churches, service clubs, business and professional groups, as well as universities, municipalities and other organizations administer their own development projects.

The federal government and several provinces financially support many of these initiatives. During the past five years, the leading Canadian development NGOs concerned with children received $120 million in federal support.

Non-governmental organizations and institutions also play an important role in drawing the public's attention to the needs of children abroad through information and education programs. Awareness of the plight of children in developing countries is growing, including among Canadian children and youth. Recent years have seen a growth in twinning arrangements between schools in Canada and the developing world, youth exchanges and other linkages, and the distribution of educational material directed to Canadians. The World Summit for Children will increase this awareness.

Conclusion

The World Summit for Children is a significant event for Canada and for all nations. For the first time in history, children are the exclusive focus of a gathering of world leaders. Heads of State and Government from every part of the globe have come together to demonstrate their commitment to improve the well-being of children everywhere. There is much that urgently ***needs*** to be done for children, and there is much that ***can*** be done. The World Summit is a key element in seeing that it *is* done.

As this report has tried to show, however, the Summit is more than a significant ***international*** event. It is also an important ***national*** event for every country in the world.

Canadians are fortunate to live in a prosperous country. The Summit is a time to reflect both on Canada's accomplishments with respect to children and the challenges that still remain.

This report has been part of the process of reflection. It is intended to stimulate a dialogue among Canadians, and between Canadians and people around the world. Through that dialogue, and the action which flows from it, each of us can help to shape a better world for children – the children of Canada and the children of the world.

Acknowledgement

Children of Canada, Children of the World is a collaborative effort involving many departments and agencies of the Government of Canada. Health and Welfare Canada, which prepared the report and coordinated input from other federal departments, expresses its appreciation to all the individuals who contributed to this effort. While they are too numerous to name, each has played an important role in the development of the report.

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